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Merlin: Respected, feared and hated by many, he was to have a higher destiny. for It was he who prepared the way for the momentous event that would unite the Island of the Mighty—the coming of Arthur Pendragon, Lord of the Kingdom of Summer.

Merlin Details

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From Reader Review Merlin for online ebook

Paul Perry says

Rarely have I had such a strong negative reaction to a book. I hated it. And part of the reason, I think, I that the first volume, Taliesin, was superb. But while in Taliesin Lawhead spun an intriguing tale that treated the source material with respect, Merlin quickly becomes a religious tract proclaiming how superior christianity is to the pagan religions that it displaces.

For me, Lawhead did two unforgivable things in this book. First, he makes Merlin a christian and a missionary. Yes, of course the Arthur cycle is part of European christian heritage - but Merlin is ALWAYS the link back to the pagan past, the holder of the magic of ancient knowledge and the oral tradition that stretches back before the christians and even the Romans. To co-opt him as a tool to preach the christian that destroys that tradition, when almost every other aspect of the story already serves that purpose, is both pointless and offensive.

And even worse than this, the author turns aside from writing a fine, gripping, meaningful story with strong religious sentiments and begins to write a sermon.

Peter Walton-Jones says

Merlin is the second book in the "Pendragon Cycle". I enjoyed the first book "Taliesin," and for me this was an even better read. The story of the ageless Merlin...bard, druid, king-maker, warrior. From his youth he is the central figure to this story of the political machinations of early Briton. The story has plenty of energy and although characters rise and fall, come and go, with great regularity it does not fail to drag the reader in all the way to the proverbial sword-in-the-stone-moment at its conclusion. One aspect that I feel slightly lets the story down is that Morgian is dangled as this central evil character but never really developed. Perhaps I will need the 3rd installment "Arthur" to fully appreciate her character and her role.

Carol says

La historia de Merlin, desde su tierna infancia, aprendiendo tanto de los druidas como de los curas cristianos que ya estaban en Inglaterra hasta que se convierte en adulto. Su romance con una princesa y después los años que pasa en el bosque hasta que descubre su destino.

Bianca says

the second book of the cycle, but the first book of the cycle that i read.. :p
all i can say is, this book made me love merlin even more.. ^_^
a must read for those of you who loves arthurian legend.. there's a bit of religious stuff in all of stephen r.
lawhead's books, which is fine with me.. :)

Logan says

[Merlin grows up, Merlin falls in love (and it's obvious she will soon die tragically), Merlin made some rocks float in the air, he had a vision, he fought a little, and he saves baby Arthur. And that's about it. (hide spoiler)]

Laura says

Segueixo amb la sèrie de Pendragón. En aquest llibre, la història està narrada per en Merlí, i ens explica la seva vida des del moment en què va néixer fins a poc després del naixement del rei Artur.

El llibre està dividit en tres parts diferenciades, i és difícil saber quina és la millor.

A la primera part ens explica la infantesa d'en Merlí, fins que es casa i espera una criatura. La part que em va agradar més va ser tot el temps que va estar raptat pel poble de "las colinas". Però el retrobament amb altres familiars que també provenien de l'Atlàntida, i com va conèixer la seva dona són també d'allò més interessants.

La segona part comença amb un Merlí boig. He de reconèixer que el principi d'aquesta part em va fer abandonar el llibre unes setmanes, ja que no entenia què havia passat, o per què m'estava explicant allò sense explicar la raó. Però un cop vaig saber la raó, la manera com està narrat em va semblar una genialitat.

Un cop en Merlí es recupera de la seva bogeria comença la última part, en la que intentarà unir tots els reis dels petits pobles d'Anglaterra per instaurar un Monarca Suprem, que serà el que regnarà a tota Anglaterra. És una part plena de batalles i intrigues polítiques, que també té el seu encant.

I, en general, un gran llibre, que et deixa amb ganes de continuar aviat amb la tercera part, on suposo que ens narrarà la infantesa del rei Artur.

Ian Propst-campbell says

Very exciting, engaging novel!

Devon Flaherty says

The Pendragon Trilogy, by Stephen R. Lawhead, which includes Taliesin, Merlin, and Arthur. I read old paperbacks from Avon Books which I received as hand-me-downs from my aunt. The original publication dates were 1987, 1988, and 1989.

Turns out I was confused about these books. I had figured out the order of the trilogy as Taliesin, Merlin, and

Arthur, but here and there I would see other titles in the series. So, once I had finished the trilogy, I researched and discovered that the “trilogy” was expanded, a few years after publication, into a “cycle,” with the addition of two more books: Pendragon and Grail. The problem? Because Lawhead released these after realizing the giant hole he left in the plot in the quick wrap-up of Arthur, he ended up writing into the hole. In other words, the books suddenly stop being (or working) chronologically. Called “more like an appendix” and “better than Arthur,” the latter books are now read by many in a makeshift order, which I wish I had done.

Sorta. Because even though I would have appreciated the whole thing in the chronological-event order without the gaping hole, I didn’t enjoy the first three books enough to want to continue to two more. I’m still torn on whether or not I should or want to continue the series.

In the words of Jessi from GoodReads, “If I were to go back in time, I would read the first book in Pendragon, then the first two books of Arthur, then go back and finish Pendragon, then finish Arthur. That’s how it actually goes sequentially.” Although, with Grail thrown in there, you would have to insert it before Arthur’s third and final “book.” For a list of the chronological progression, see the Wikipedia article [HERE](#). But how obnoxious do we want to get? How much does all this jumping around and amending take away from the quality of the series? I mean, reading it without knowing these tricks, I just got to the end and—through tiny little tears—thought, What?!? We worked our way (the entire time) up to the Kingdom of Summer and then it was SKIPPED?!?

But to be honest, it wasn’t as surprising as it should of been, because the whole trilogy has major issues with plot development. We’ll get to that in a minute.

First, let’s talk about another super-handly list at Wikipedia that—had I known then what I know now—I would have printed out to have hand while reading. This list is the modern character and place name equivalents of the ones that Lawhead uses. In his defense, the whole series is moved back several centuries (to fifth century Britain from medieval times) to line it up more closely with the demise of Atlantis and the Roman empire. From there, the books are highly history-inspired, which means that the names have been made more appropriate to the time period. However, I really fault Lawhead for not giving us a simple list by which to decipher the characters and places we have grown accustomed to, like the (obvious) Guinevere as Gwenhwyvar, or—the much less obvious—Excalibur as Caledvwlch.

Not to mention, it would have been helpful to know why I was beginning an Arthurian trilogy on Atlantis, with nary a character to recognize (or so I thought).

Basically, I love reading Arthurian legends, but—despite its fan-base and high recommendations—I have a lot to complain about this series. Some more:

The narrator changes. This wouldn’t be so bad if it happened on a consistent basis, but it doesn’t. And there were times I was wondering who on earth was talking to me, and why. Not only that, but the voice barely changes (or not at all) between the narrators. Only the perspective does.

The book was rampant with negative phrases like “no less than.” It drove me batty.

There were a lot of battles. Detailed. Especially in Arthur. Some people live for that type of fantasy writing. I do not.

The series just plain lacked excitement. The best bits were really the middle of Taliesin and the end of Arthur. In between, I was usually bored.

Lawhead has a really strange way of in-your-face foreshadowing. In and of itself, it’s a bit laughable. But when you pair it with lack of delivery, it’s downright infuriating. Like, he might say, “Their fears for the

morning would prove to be true.” Then, in the morning, maybe it would drizzle and then they would win the battle. WHAT?!? This happened over and over and over. I would get all psyched up for some fore-told event, and the event itself would fizzle in a lake of mediocrity and ordinariness.

Specifically, Morgian’s (Morgan le Fay) evilness is talked up frequently and Merlin is always showing physical anxiety about her. But when she does show up—so rarely—she’s almost all talk and she accomplishes very little. The two truly vile things she actually does manage are off-screen and vague. The same is true for Guinevere (in the negative), but I am assured that she comes more into her own in the later books.

All in all, I felt very unfulfilled with character and plot development. I felt like there were a whole mess of words which took me nowhere. And the development that did happen came in fits and starts that trailed off into oblivion. (It’s hard to accurately describe this feeling. Because I know, literally, the plot did continue on. But it was like running in a dream. Or like you were reading an author’s plot notes. Or running on a treadmill. There was no zing. No excitement.) Plus, it seems to me that Lawhead omitted many of the messier sides of his primary characters in favor of a glossier Christianity (and I say this as a Christian.) This is boring and inauthentic. Where is the affair? Where is the illegitimate son? It’s part of the legends, and it’s part of what would make these characters both relatable and—in the long run—heroes.

Lawhead is quite an author for telling, anyways. He’s more likely—at least in these books—to tell you that something is “majestic” than to help you feel its majesty.

In conclusion, if you like Arthurian legends or classic fantasy and are willing to persevere when things are less than perfect, then you should take a crack at this series. I would recommend having a list of the modern names, nearby, and also read the books in the order recommended above. Keep a keen eye on passing time (while understanding that some of the characters live much longer than mere humans), place, tribes/people groups, and people. With the cursory knowledge that you now have, of the series, I’m pretty sure you’ll have a much better experience than I did.

Oh, and Atlanteans = Elves.

(Please note that Lawhead would argue me on this last point, as well as give a much clearer explanation on why the books ended up in the state they did. See his comments at [The Starving Artist](#) review.)

QUOTES:

TALIESIN:

““Yes, and good fortune will require more of you than failure ever did” (p155).

““That is where you are wrong, woman. There is never enough time for love-making. We must take it when we can”” (p330).

““That matters but little,’ Cuall reminded him. ‘They are here, and that is the meal that is on our plate” (p336).

MERLIN:

“Yet, every man has two names: the one he is given, and the one he wins for himself” (p15).

“And as there is much evil in the world, there is much doubt also” (p15).

“Humility, if it comes at all, most always comes too late” (p21).

“...the twin fields of bed and battle” (p27).

“A city is an unnatural place” (p30).

“But as I said, men’s hearts remember long after their minds have forgotten” (p38).

“You must understand, Myrddin Bach, not every man will follow the Light” (p45).

“They did not trust writing, and in this showed remarkable wisdom” (p61).

“I believe that certain powerful events leave behind their own lingering traces which also color the land in subtle ways” (p135).

“...the seasons fly? Up they swirl, winging back to the Great Hand which gave them. They fly like the wild geese, but nevermore return” (p193).

“Be thankful you are knit with such strong stuff” (p324).

“To decide for one is to decide against another. I never imagined it would be this hard” (p328).

“This is our work in creation: to decide. And what we decide is woven into the thread of time and being forever” (p328).

“But remember the church is only men, and men can become jealous of another’s favor. Do not hate them for it” (p329).

“...even though I know the Light is ever found in the lost unlikely places” (p333).

“Hearing with understanding is perhaps the greater part of wisdom” (p347).

“Once spoken, a word can not be called back; once loosed, an arrow cannot return to the bow. What happens, for good or ill, happens forever, and that is the way of it” (p364).

“As I have said, the illuminating spirit, like the wind, goes where it will, and sheds a light that all-too-often obscures as much as it reveals” (p381).

“...you are not the first man to love a woman. Stop acting like a wounded bear and let us discover what can be done” (p385).

“It happens like this sometimes—and all the plans, all the reasons, all desires and possibilities fade to nothing. And all that remains is the single unwilled act” (p392).

“Of course, there is no certainty in following, either. That is what makes it faith” (p393).

“Unreasonable men are even unreasonable, and only become more so when threatened. Truth always

threatens the false-hearted” (p393).

“...forgive yourself as you have been forgiven. Your failings are not unique to you alone” (p421).

“That she loved where she should rightly despise was her glory” (p439).

ARTHUR:

“If you feel maligned and impugned in his presence,’ he said, ‘no doubt it is the truth working in you” (p35).

“It was, they discovered, the foundation stone of the worlds-realm, so they decided to lift it up and see what lay beneath it. This they did. And do you know what they found?/’I cannot say. What did they find?/’Love,’ replied Myrddin simply” (p148).

“...as if good men and brave did not sleep in turf houses in ground hallowed by their own blood... as if war were a word” (p197).

“Great Light! The enemy’s power is so fragile! The devils can use only what we ourselves give them” (p220).

““Then be worthy, boy. No one stands between you and your honor!”” (p330).

“That which is given to us to do, we will do,’ he said and turned his face away. ‘We are men and not angles after all” (p404).

REVIEW WRITTEN FOR THE STARVING ARTIST BLOG

Richard Derus says

Rating: 2.5* of five

The Publisher Says: He was born to greatness, the son of a druid bard and a princess of lost Atlantis. A trained warrior, blessed with the gifts of prophecy and song, he grew to manhood in a land ravaged by the brutal greed of petty chieftains and barbarian invaders.

Merlin: Respected, feared and hated by many, he was to have a higher destiny. for It was he who prepared the way for the momentous event that would unite the Island of the Mighty—the coming of Arthur Pendragon, Lord of the Kingdom of Summer.

My Review: Merlin's first-person narrative of how he makes Arthur into ARTHUR.

More Jesusy stuff. Now admittedly it's not the Roman Catholic horror that's called, very puzzlingly, Christianity (it's not); but the whole subject area grates on me when presented to me as An Undeniable, Inevitable Progressive Event. It wasn't. It made things a lot worse for a lot of people for over a millenium. (Religious wars pretty much non-stop from Western Imperial fall until...wait, until now! So TWO millenia!)

I liked Merlin's first-person narrative voice a lot more than the first book's omniscient narration. But the

Atlantean horse pucky and the religious nonsense...well, had it not been for a cute boy wanting me to read his favorite books, I'd've dropped them fast.

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Claire Belberg says

This second book of the cycle was challenging to get into because it starts in a style that matches the state of the protagonist's mind - chaotic, nightmarish, despairing. Once I moved past that, as Merlin moved into life and hope again, I was once again caught up in the grand sweep of Stephen R Lawhead's saga. It was engrossing, thrilling, sometimes chilling, sometimes heart-warming. The chapters whizzed by. When I reached the end, I wished I had the third volume at hand.

Anticipating a visit to the UK, I find myself soaking up the history and anthropology of the foundations of modern Britain. Lawhead makes it easy to follow in this fascinating and insightful series. Now if I could just remember those Roman and Celtic place names...

LENA says

Segundo libro y tan bueno o más que el primero. Si en Las Nieblas De Avalon caímos rendidos ante Morgana, en esta obra somos subyugados por este Merlin.

En esta obra seguiremos paso a paso el crecimiento de este legendario mago, conoceremos su origen, y entenderemos cómo fue que aquellos sucesos oídos en un sin número de canciones y leídos en igual cantidad de textos, forjaron su leyenda.

Comenzaremos por su infancia, el mismísimo Myrddin (nombre celta del mago), nos contará su historia. Volveremos a encontrarnos con el rey Avallach y su hija Charis, madre del protagonista, otra vez sentiremos ese cada vez más débil toque místico, característico de la primera entrega, en las enseñanzas que el chico recibirá por parte de Hafgan, antiguo mentor de Taliesin. Descubriremos una realidad tanto religiosa como políticamente nueva. Si en Taliesin pudimos encontrarnos con un detallado mundo druídico y romano, en Merlín veremos como aquellas antiguas y cada vez más débiles creencias y costumbres se verán ofuscadas lentamente por la aparición del Cristianismo como única y poderosa fuente de fe y de Jesús, el más grande hombre, digno de imitar e idolatrar. La narración continuará con la juventud y adultez del mago más grande de todos los tiempos, de esta forma, seguiremos la vida de Merlín, descubriremos aventuras, traiciones, amores y desamores, honor, oscuridad, penas y luchas, palabras, cantos y llantos en una fascinante y épica historia. Una historia que te atrapa y de la que ya no puedes escapar.

Lucie Müller says

Fünf Sterne!

Durch die ersten paar Seiten musste ich mich zwar kämpfen, denn die Ich-Perspektive schafft eine gewisse

Distanz zum Geschehen. Es ist ganz klar, dass ein alter, weiser Merlin über seine Kindertage erzählt und deswegen fehlt die Nähe zum ganz jungen Merlin jeweils. Nach einigen Seiten legt sich dies jedoch. Was mir besonders gut an dieser Merlin-Version gefällt, ist dass er zwar der weise, mächtige Magier ist, aber dass er alles andere als unfehlbar ist.

Das junge Christentum spielt immer mehr eine Rolle. Das hat mich nicht gestört, da es irgendwie zur Geschichte passt. Ich könnte mir aber vorstellen, dass dies einige Leser befremdet und das Buch deswegen als zu dick aufgetragen finden. Das Lesepublikum aus den 80-Jahren hat dieses Element der Geschichte wahrscheinlich anders wahrgenommen als Leser heutzutage.

Auch am Sprachstil merkt man, dass das Buch in einer anderen Epoche geschrieben wurde. Hier haben Flora und Fauna tatsächlich noch Namen, werden lebendig beschrieben und schaffen so Atmosphäre. Das ist fast das schönste an diesem Buch.

5 Sterne für die beste Merlin-Legende

Jeff Miller says

As much as I liked the first book in the series, I liked this one more. The first book told two intertwining stories as it needed to do. This was done well, but Merlin is much more focused and I liked it better for that. This is really my favorite of the retellings regarding Merlin, especially since he is a man of virtue and humility.

Angie says

This second book in the series takes us from Merlin's childhood to his saving baby Arthur (I don't think that's a spoiler---don't we all know he did that?). Unlike Taliesin, the narration is first person, which I think is right. I like Merlin telling his own story. I liked this one more than I liked Taliesin, but that was to be expected. Isn't Merlin everyone's favorite Arthurian character? Merlin is a character who's taken on many forms. I like the old Once and Future King/Disney Merlin (though I've always struggled with the concept of him living backward), but I like a young and studly Merlin, as in this book, as well. He is sometimes presented as evil (after all, by most accounts he is the son of a demon---speaking of which, if you haven't seen Hellboys I & II, I highly recommend them). Anyway, Lawhead's Merlin is good and quite religious. Speaking of religion, of course Christianity is a big part of Arthurian legend---holy grail and all---and these books are no exception; however, the Christianity of Arthurian legend is a little weird and kind of pagan, which is certainly the case with these books, but I'm not bothered by it. Moving on, Lawhead clearly knows his Malory and his Geoffrey---he is obviously well versed in Arthurian legend, though he changes major aspects of more traditional versions---such things as Merlin's parentage (and Arthur's, for that matter) or having the character who has traditionally been Merlin's sister be his wife instead. Legends have no definitive source, so I don't mind him changing things up, as long as he doesn't brutalize the soul of the story a la that wretched travesty, First Knight.

Robin says

I always love stories of Merlin and Arthur and this series has been good so far, however it is disturbing to me that Merlin is Christian in these books.

