

# Lady of the Trillium Short Guide

## Lady of the Trillium by Marion Zimmer Bradley

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



# Contents

<a href="#">Lady of the Trillium Short Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Social Concerns.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Techniques.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Key Questions.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Literary Precedents.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Related Titles.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Copyright Information.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>



# Characters

Haramis, the Lady of the Trillium, provides both the point of view and the source of action in the novel.

Now "two hundreds old," Haramis must find and initiate a successor, a spiritual daughter, to insure the future of the land which she and her two sisters freed and unified. A Circe character, she has her familiars, the lammergeiers, and her menage of half-human creatures, and some of whom, like Uzun, she herself has transformed.

Haramis, both the Good and the Evil Witch, has a positive, regenerative aspect and a dark side, which uses its magical powers not to liberate but to subjugate, to turn others into extensions of herself. The prowess and energy with which she defeated Orogastus is still present, as is the fierce protectiveness for those to whom she is close, but so are the impatience, the unpredictability, and the sudden rages.

Ambivalent about relinquishing powers to her successor, she withholds her wisdom as easily as she bestows it, her mission to educate giving way to her need to control, to re-create herself rather than empowering her daughter, Mikayla.

The characters are those of the Rapunzel tale, Mikayla being taken from her parents, the king and queen, and imprisoned in Haramis' Tower, where she is trapped until she can claim her own powers and be united with her prince, her other self, here present in Fiolon. As in the story, the witch seeks to break the bond between Mikayla and Fiolon in order to preserve her hegemony, a self-destructive which has become a debilitating, life-threatening disease, until she is able, through self-sacrifice, to achieve immortality through her successor, Mikayla. Uzun, the harp-counselor who befriends the children, is likewise liberated from the inanimate shape into which he has been transformed.

Mikayla and Fiolon are fairy tale characters, more like a brother and sister (they are cousins) than like lovers in this youthful time. United by temperament and destiny, their qualities complement one another, forming a complete psychic bond. Mikayla is an unconventional fairy princess — blunt, forthright, combative, distrustful of feelings; she needs familiarity with the more intuitive part of her nature to be initiated as a completed Archimage.

Mikayla's rough edges, the practical, prosaic bent of her nature, the quick temper and impulsive actions, are refined by Fiolon's more empathic gentleness, his talents for persuasion and patience. But as an orphan with no defined place, Fiolon must reckon with his own destiny as Lord of Var as, banished by Haramis from the Tower, he survives a perilous journey home to become both prince and Archimage, as well as a musician and poet, with a special feeling for trees and forests, the creative world.

Humans share sentience with other creatures as well, both friendly, like the Oddlings and the Vispi, and threatening, like the fierce Skriteks — reminders of our prehuman selves. Although subjugated as servants, these beings are integral parts of human

wisdom, as is Uzun, Haramis' counselor. Even more striking extensions of human powers are the lammergeiers, whose size and flight lend superhuman mobility, and whose loyalty and courage enlarge the human spirit.



## Social Concerns

The land nurtured by the Archimage Haramis — the Lady of the Trillium — is comprised of two kingdoms — Ruwenda, where the Princess Mikayla had grown up in her Citadel, and the more distant Labornok — unified by the Archimage Haramis and her sisters earlier. The central social issue in this fantasy novel is that of balancing the constituent and sometimes conflicting elements which make up a social world in a way that promotes the continued health and vibrant future of the community.

A large part of this effort involves the proper education and training of the new generation, the new leadership. As Princess Mikayla and her soulmate and companion Lord Fiolon of Var venture further into their world they discover hitherto unknown threats and possibilities — fearsome Skriteks, evil magicians on one mountainside, a cult which demands blood sacrifice on another — and learn the skills they will need to nurture their lands themselves, since both will be Archimages, supersentient beings with magical powers who act as links between cosmic powers and the land with its people. Their health and wisdom insure that all connections are made which keep the land healthy and everything in balance.

Along with magic and secret lore, they learn the uses of a technology system left by the Vanished Ones, how to summon and employ the resources at their disposal — the lammergeiers, for instance, great birds to ride, and the fronials, carriers of loads.

As Haramis, who has lived many lifetimes as Archimage and Guardian of the land, gradually loses her reason and memory in a series of "brainstorm," or small strokes, the land declines — "every time I get sick, so does the land," says Haramis. Rivers are poisoned, crops fail, fish die in great numbers, and there is a "wrongness" in the air which comes from Ruwenda.

Along with the need for the will and wisdom to preserve the earth goes the need to maintain a positive, nonexploitative relationship with others on the earth — sentient nonhumans, like the Oddlings, Nysommu, and Vispi who live side by side with humans, animals like the lammergeiers, and plants, as well as the need to use magic (knowledge) and technology, for positive ends. A tendency to treat others — other creatures and the natural world itself — as commodities to be exploited (as Haramis has by turning Uzun the Oddling into a harp) poisons the environment, and the new generation, with its fresh sensitivities, must restore balance.

For this to happen leadership must pass smoothly and positively between generations, and the new Archimage, Mikayla, needs validation as herself, not a carbon copy of Haramis herself.

The difficult relationship between Haramis and her often unwilling protege complicates this progression, which the old Archimage's illness makes impossible. In addition, the role of Archimage, traditionally a solitary one, seems incompatible with the more everyday role as Queen for which Mikayla had been groomed at home. She would

rather marry Lord Fiolon and raise a family than be an Archimage — another set of opposites which must be balanced.



## Techniques

The image of balance structures the novel, set in the two realms of Ruwenda and Labornok and organized as a quest for unity, or balance, between opposites. Motifs within the quest represent related dualisms — male and female, reason and intuition, science and magic, nature and culture, and nurturing against destruction. The swamps, hills, and mountains extend from Orogastus's Tower, a monument to the good and evil in human knowledge and prowess, to the hidden places — remote mountains, swamps, mires, ice caves — where nature's mysteries survive. Even the mires themselves — the golden and the black — and the two-sided mountains embody dualism.

The quest motif, Mikayla's mission to Labornok, Fiolon's banishment and dangerous journey home, where he claims his rightful heritage and role as Archimage, connecting the separated places and providing the energy necessary for growth.

The elements which co-exist in the macrocosm are mirrored in the human psyche, as characters seek to reconcile positive and negative aspects of self, and come to terms with conflicting concepts in their education — the need to know both one's powers and one's limits, the need for experimentation and that for contemplation, and in their emotional growth — the need for separation as well as connection, for awareness of both the self and others. Moral development moves between poles as well, as the children progress from a juvenile preoccupation with curiosity and adventure for its own sake, a folly which allowed Haramis to catch them in the first place) to an awareness of the need for act out of responsibility for others, as they do first for Uzun the harp-counselor, and then for their entire kingdoms. Relationships embody the unity of opposites as well, as the fast friendship and developing love, the bonding between Mikayla and Fiolon, culminates in the ancient symbol of unity, the marriage of two rulers who combine their powers to benefit of their people and their land, as mythic patterns guide the heroes from youth and foolishness to maturity and wisdom, from dreams and possibilities to their realization.

The quest here is for the same prize as in the Arthurian tales Bradley is moved by — a talisman which will restore fertility, revive the dying land.

The Wounded King (here a Queen) metaphor is prevalent, as is the magical Talisman, the rare, mystical black trillium. Flowers, of course, are symbols of nature, "nature magic," and women's power. This is a peaceful world with no war or really any weapons besides those of magic. It is an Edenic, pastoral world, a green land where innocence and freshness are valued. There is a romance quality here, not only in the young lovers' plot, but in the landscape as well. Like the mystic Rose of medieval and Renaissance tradition, trilliums are spring flowers, signifying rebirth and regeneration. The three petals (the Threewinged Circle) of the trillium signifies the Trinity formed by Haramis and her two sisters, magical women who freed the land from the evil wizard Orogastus, allowing the trillium to bloom.



Certain animals signify elemental psychic powers, and Mikayla especially shares a bond with a huge bird, the lammergeier Red Eye. Her growing ability to summon and work together with the creature signifies her growing awareness of her own spirit, her interior and exterior powers. Music, too, represents the self and its expression, as in Uzun the harp and the ballads and old songs which are Fiolon's special knowledge.



# Themes

The search for balance in the personal, the social, and the natural worlds is realized in the novel's controlling theme of growing up — initiation, and education. The children Mikayla and Fiolon, innocent but adventurous, are spirited away by Haramis to be trained in magic and specialized knowledge, including traditional magic such as visioning, weather magic, and illusions, but also venturing on their own into the secrets of the ancient technological contraptions left in the tower by Orogastus, the evil magician-scientist Haramis defeated by Haramis long ago. They communicate with magical spheres, multimedia-type screens which allow them to speak at distances and call up faraway places in a solar-powered magic mirror, which functions somewhat like the computer screen in a game of *Myst*, but their ultimate goal is to develop the "land sense," a mental and emotional bond by which the Archimage becomes one with the land.

Their education takes a quantum leap, however, when the children embark on their own quest, a search for a body for their friend Uzun, the loyal Oddling counselor, turned into a harp by his mistress Haramis long ago. Her search takes Mikayla into the unknown, the Temple of Meret on the "other side" of Mount Gidris in Labornok, where devotees worship a kind of neolithic fertility goddess in seemingly harmless, even exotic, ceremonies. In return for Uzun's new body Mikayla agrees to become one of Meret's Daughters, returning each year to take part in temple rituals. This initiation, however, turns deadly near the end of the novel, when Haramis heroically replaces Mikayla as the jubilee sacrifice, whose bleeding heart is offered to Meret in a barbaric fertility ritual, and passes the torch to Mikayla, whose marriage to Fiolon, by then Archimage of Labornok, restores the missing balance.

Thus bonding, between a people and their land, between men and women, between friends, and even between people and other creatures, such as the lammergeiers, is the dominant theme of the novel. In this world those in touch with their inner selves, as Mikayla and Fiolon are, develop actual psychic bonds with others who are their soulmates — emotionally, mentally, and even physically. Haramis, in her desire to sunder these bonds (here, between Fiolon and Mikayla) in order to better control others, violates basic natural and moral imperatives. Her death at the end of the novel is appropriate as restitution for homage paid to the goddess' dark side (Meret).



## Key Questions

As with the Darkover series, the universe of the Black Trillium is an inviting world for the groups of fellow-travelers Bradley's work always seems to find. The archetypal, folkloric, and ecological elements in the novel are attractive to a wide readership which would also include those interested in Jungian and mythic approaches. The entire feminist reevaluation of what it means to be a witch, crone, or wise woman, would prompt animated discussion.

1. How does the "growing up" experience in Lady of the Trillium fit with what we know about real-life childhood and adolescence? In what ways is Mikayla going through a rather ordinary teen-ager's rebellion and search for identity?
2. How does Mikayla's character make her different, and more interesting, than the typical fairy tale princess of our tradition? Fiolon from the traditional hero or handsome prince?
3. How is the experience of aging and accepting one's own mortality presented in the character of Haramis?

Does she fit the traditional stereotype of the older person?

4. What is Bradley's view of the relationship of man and nature?
5. What is the role/relationship of science, technology and magic?

## Literary Precedents

Science fantasy itself is filled with adventure romance in a magical universe peopled with numinous characters and fantastic creatures. Bradley's precedents in this and contemporaries in this are Andre Norton, Roger Zelazny, Ursula Le Guin, Anne McCaffrey, as well as Sally Gerheart's ecofeminism in *Wanderground*. Its archetypes can be found in the pastoral romance of renewal and rediscovery, familiar in Shakespearean drama both early, in *As You Like It* (c.1599-1600) and later in *The Winter's Tale* (c.1610-1611) and *The Tempest* (c.1611) and in our folk and fairy tale tradition.

## Related Titles

Lady of the Trillium and The Black Trillium (1991) are two of a trio Bradley, Andre Norton, and Julian May; the third, Blood Trillium is by May alone.



# Copyright Information

## Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress  
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.

Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3.

Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.

[1. Literature—History and criticism. 2. Literature—Bio-bibliography]

I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952

Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048 ISBN 0-933833-32-6

Copyright ©, 1994, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing, Inc., 2100 "S" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994