



The Magic Circle

By Katherine Neville

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When her cousin is slain by an unknown assassin, Ariel Behn becomes the sole heir to a family legacy: a sinister cache of manuscripts that thrusts her into the deadly center of international intrigue--and an age-old enigma that spans the centuries. Whoever assembles and interprets the cryptic clues of this ancient mystery will possess the power to control the fate of the world.

What strange powers lie hidden within the manuscripts? Splashed against a lavish backdrop that sweeps from the rise of the Roman Empire to the fall of the Berlin Wall, THE MAGIC CIRCLE finds one woman standing at the center of it all: Ariel Behn. As she races across continents to reveal the dark secrets buried in her family's past, she begins to unlock the chilling truth of the coming millennium. . . .

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Neville's reach exceeds her grasp by a long shot in her chaotic third novel (after *The Eight* and *A Calculated Risk*), a bewildering attempt to blend historical fiction, New Age adventure and modern techno-thriller. Utah nuclear technician Ariel Behn receives a set of mysterious manuscripts from her Native American cousin Sam, who has narrowly survived their attempted theft. As possessor of the scrolls, Ariel finds her life in similar danger, especially after her company sends her to Russia with handsome, mysterious Wolfgang Hauser. During a torrid affair with Wolfgang, Ariel comes to suspect that he may be after the scrolls himself. At the same time, various members of her glamorous, far-flung family inform her that Hitler, Genghis Khan and the ancient Romans all sought the scrolls, which seem to hold the key to a secret power grid beneath the earth. Alternating family history with thorny historical passages, Neville brings the narrative back to Utah for a ludicrous wilderness showdown among the scrolls' pursuers. Neville has buried a decent story in so many expository layers of far-fetched historical gibberish and New Age nonsense that even her most devoted readers may find themselves exasperated. Author tour.

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From [Booklist](#)

Nuclear scientist Ariel Behn's beloved cousin, Sam, is murdered, and Ariel learns that she is heir to a cache of manuscripts that may unlock the secrets not only of the past but also of the coming millennium. This promising premise allows the action to move back and forth in time and place, jumping from first-century Rome and the Holy Land up to the late 1980s and on to the contemporary world. There is something here for thriller fans and for those who enjoy historical fiction. But Neville weighs down her book with, first, the complex Behn family tree and, second, a head-whirling miasma of mythology, astronomy, religion, and geography--all fascinating millennial topics in themselves but never quite successfully integrated with the story here. Nor does the ending offer the payoff that has kept readers going through more than 550 pages. Still, individual sections of the book are compelling, and fans of that emerging subgenre--the millennial thriller--will want to add this one to their reading list. *Ilene Cooper*

From Kirkus Reviews

Like Neville's 1988 debut, *The Eight*, another daft, overstuffed, sprawling sofa of a yarn involving dozens of famous figures, places, and objects, along with a mysterious manuscript that nobody ever gets to readoh, yeah, and the collapse of communism. Ariel Behn, a nuclear security worker and part-time code-breaker, is devastated when her beloved brother, Sam (he isn't really her brother and. . . well, it's complicated), turns up dead. Among other things, he had a manuscript for Ariel that, suddenly, all sorts of people are eager to lay their hands on. Then a decidedly undead Sam (bad guys tried to assassinate him and got the wrong man) contacts his sister and says he sent her the encoded document, though it's never arrived. The devilishly handsome Wolfgang Hauser of the International Atomic Energy Agency also shows an interest in the manuscript, as does Uncle Lafcadio, arriving from Austria, violin teacher Dacian Bassarides (Ariel's grandfather, we eventually learn), and Ariel's boss, Pastor Owen Dart. Meanwhile, in numerous historical asides, we meet Ariel's great-aunt Clio (she finds something important in the Sibyl's cave in 1890), Jesus, Aleister Crowley, Pontius Pilate, four Roman emperors, Joseph of Arimathea, Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great, and. . . What are they all after? It seems a set of ancient sacred objects, or ``Hallows," possess immense magical powers, and the manuscript describesmaybe locatesthose objects. There's more than one manuscript, of course. Elsewhere, Ariel learns just how diverse and cosmopolitan her huge family is: Adolf Hitler, or ``Lucky," was a close family friend; various other relatives turn out to be fascists; and wolfish Wolfgang, a Nazi who's crazy about Ariel while he thinks she's thoroughly Aryan, is crushed to learn that her

grandfather was a gypsy. The heroine's devastating discoveries concerning her family's murky history are intriguing and worthwhile; pity Neville didn't just junk the rest of it. Still, fans of *The Eight* should stagger away with bemused grins. (Author tour) -- *Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Richard Mills:

This *The Magic Circle* tend to be reliable for you who want to certainly be a successful person, why. The main reason of this *The Magic Circle* can be among the great books you must have is giving you more than just simple reading food but feed you actually with information that might be will shock your earlier knowledge. This book is definitely handy, you can bring it almost everywhere and whenever your conditions in e-book and printed types. Beside that this *The Magic Circle* forcing you to have an enormous of experience including rich vocabulary, giving you trial run of critical thinking that could it useful in your day exercise. So , let's have it and revel in reading.

James Cooper:

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Bernard Walker:

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Helen Woodson:

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