



The Winter Mantle

Elizabeth Chadwick

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Normandy 1067---William may have conquered England, but it is a conquest of a different kind that one English earl has in mind.

Fresh from his defeat of King Harold at the Battle of Hastings, William of Normandy has returned home in triumph, accompanied by the English nobles he cannot trust to leave behind. For Waltheof of Huntingdon, however, rebellion is not at the forefront of his thoughts. From the moment he catches sight of Judith, daughter of the King's formidable sister, he knows he has found his future wife.

When Waltheof saves Judith's life, it is clear that the attraction is mutual. But marriage has little to do with love in medieval Europe. When William refuses to let the couple wed, Waltheof joins forces with his fellow rebels in an uprising against the King. William brutally crushes the rebellion, but realizes that Waltheof cannot be ignored. Marrying him to his niece, he decides, is the perfect way to keep him in check.

But is the match between the Saxon earl and Norman lady made in heaven or hell? As their children grow, Waltheof and Judith must choose between their feelings for each other and older loyalties. At the same time, the reputation of Waltheof's Norman acquaintance Simon de Senlis continues to flourish. The son of William's chamberlain, he shares a special bond with Waltheof, who rescued him from being trampled by a horse when he was a squire. Now Simon enjoys the confidence of both the King and the rebel earl. And when tension between the two ignites once more, it is Simon who is set to reap the reward.

Based on an astonishing true story of honor, treachery, and love, *The Winter Mantle* is historical fiction at its very best, reaching from the turbulent reign of William the conqueror to the high drama of the Crusades.

The Winter Mantle Details

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Author : Elizabeth Chadwick

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From Reader Review The Winter Mantle for online ebook

Andreea says

Quite bad historical fiction - luckily, Elizabeth Chadwick has a quite catchy style that made me somehow finish this book despite it actually being so bad.

The first issue I have is with the portrayal of women - most of them are fickle, unpleasant and stressful for their husbands. I was particularly grossed out by a fragment where Judith's mum, very upset by the news of her daughter's future marriage with Waltheof, was made to feel significantly better after by just being promised new dresses.

So, all in all, this follows a typical romance plotline, where the main characters see each other and suffer instant attraction. There is little new to the scene, and in truth, little to the plot as well. The characters also lack complexity - they are quite clearly defined by one or two main characteristics but do not show any deeper sides. It seems as if the whole book is an enlarged story, rather than a novel.

But while the content lacked a lot, it was not completely unbearable, as Elizabeth Chadwick has a moderately enjoyable style. I just fail to understand all the rave reviews, since there are so many things of much higher quality on the literary scene of historical fiction and romance.

Heather Vieiro says

I've been on a Ye Olde England kick, and somehow this came up in my reading queue so I downloaded to my kindle and enjoyed it quite a bit. It's not quite a romance, though it has some steamy bits--I'd say it deviates from romance in that there's no real hero or heroine--just people, in relationships, and some of them (Judith!) are not particularly likable. I liked that Waltheof was not the smartest tool in the shed, but Judith was still drawn to him. She was a shrew. The book did throw some light on the politics of the time and I enjoyed learning more about the conflicts between the Normans and the Saxons.

Monica says

A decent historical fiction from the 11th century. It follows two different sets of characters. The first is of Waltheof of Huntingdon a Norman captive and his love of Judith, the niece of William the conqueror. The second set of characters is their daughter Matilda and Simon de Senlis. I read this book quickly and even though it was a long book the pages did flow. I only gave it a 3 rating because I just didn't love the story. I especially didn't like Judith and the way things ended with her and Waltheof. The author had to stay true to history and I appreciate that but it wasn't my favorite story. Not a bad historical fiction book overall.

Misfit says

The Winter Mantle begins in 1067 after The Conquest as Waltheof of Huntingdon and several other English

nobles are kept under William's close eye in Normandy. Waltheof desires William's haughty niece Judith and is torn between making his peace with William and pressing suit for her hand or participating in further rebellion against the Norman conquerors. After one rebellion in the north fails, William forgives Waltheof and marries him to Judith, although she is torn between pride in her Norman ancestry and desire for her husband, and this eventually leads to discord in the marriage. Waltheof allows himself to be convinced to participate in one last attempt at overthrowing William, and this time with drastic results.

The story then takes up with the second generation, Waltheof's beloved daughter Matilda and Norman courtier Simon de Senlis who at the behest of King William Rufus comes to take charge of the lands Judith inherited from Waltheof. Furious, the ever haughty Judith refuses to cooperate and wed Simon and he turns his eye to Matilda as a younger and more appealing choice. The story then continues as Matilda and Simon raise their children, and Judith finally comes to terms with her own guilt in Waltheof's fate and his death as a traitor, as well as the consequences to Simon and Judith's marriage from Simon's actions on his return from the Crusades.

Based on true people, this was a lively entertaining tale and I very much enjoyed how the author was able to take such a snotty piece of goods like Judith and humanize her in the end - it really was a love/hate relationship between she and Waltheof and in many ways those two warring emotions are very much the same. As with all of her books, Chadwick has an amazing knack of bringing the medieval period to life, be it the sights, sounds, smells, food, clothing and more. Highly recommended and a side note that the tiny baby at the very end of the book has his own story in *The Falcons of Montabard*.

Judywork says

I am happy to say that the second half of the book was well worth the struggle I had in getting through the first half! The book is divided into two stories, the first one being of Waltheof of Huntington and his ill fated marriage to William the Conqueror's niece, Judith. It was definitely not a romance/love story in any expected fashion? I struggled with it, but it did cause me to go do my own research on them!

The second half of the book was about their daughter Matilda and her marriage to Waltheof's Norman acquaintance Simon de Senlis. This story kept my attention and did explain the underlying issues of Waltheof and Judith!

I gave it 4 stars...because of my difficulties with the first half. In the end, I was surprised and satisfied with the overall story! As usual, Elizabeth Chadwick did an excellent job of weaving history and fiction together even though I am sure that there was limited actual history for her to go on as she started this story! She inspires me to go on my own quests to find out more about the history that she presents in each book!

Holly says

As a general rule, I love historical fiction--and the more historically accurate, the better! This book was a fun glimpse into post-1066 England and just the kind of thing I was looking for when I asked a local librarian for a recommendation of adult historical fiction. I have read plenty of historical fiction for kids since we homeschool and I certainly love it, but I was on the hunt for something decent for grown ups along the same line. The BIG drawback for me, and one that gives me pause when I consider reading more of this author's books (or in asking that librarian for any more suggestions), is that in the middle of a really interesting story we are interrupted by cheap Harlequin Romance-esque smut. Out of 400 pages, probably 20 are devoted to this cheapening of an otherwise good story. There are ways to say that people are attracted to one another, or that they are engaging in marital (or extra-marital for that matter) relations without getting graphic, or tacky, about it. I think our culture is so dumbed down in this area (I'm thinking of some social media bill boards advertising Obamacare right about now) that I guess publishers urge their writers to throw in some "throbbing members" just to be sure there are sales for a 6th grade reading level public. I don't want 99% brownie and 1% dog poop!

Blodeuedd Finland says

I have read almost all of her books, and I do like how she take characters that makes you want to read more.

In this one we have Judith, she is the niece of William the Conqueror, and she married a Dane/Englisman, Earl Waltheof. We get to see those big events, and we are also on the side, which I liked. You do not have to be in the middle of things to get the picture.

Judith, oh she was nice and turned into a bit of a shrew. Waltheof was nice, but did not really see the big picture.

But yes I thought the book would be about them, nope after half the book we get the POV of their daughter Mathilda and her marriage to Simon de Senlis. And it ended before the good part! Well the good part for me, I wanted to know about her second marriage to King David of Scotland. She was just so old, I get that they wanted a connection, still so old, could have been too old for kids (but was not), and would have wanted to see the take on that.

Interesting, but still not one of her best. She has many books after all.

OLT says

(4.5 stars) Elizabeth Chadwick is such a great storyteller that you don't even realize how much history you're learning as you read her books. Her earliest historical novels have as their protagonists fictional characters living in well-researched and well-described Medieval England. Her more recent, such as Lady of the English, have real historical characters and she makes them come alive by filling in gaps in the historical accounts with well-thought-out speculations that don't clash with established facts.

This story, published a decade ago, has as its characters real historical figures of the time just after William, Duke of Normandy, invaded England, defeated King Harold at the Battle of Hastings, and the Normans took

control with William as the new king. There are two love stories here. The first is that of Judith, niece of William the Conqueror, who married English earl Waltheof of Huntingdon. The English people, as is to be expected, resent the Norman invaders and the Norman invaders feel that the English are a barbaric, uncultured lot, so this love story is quite something to read.

The second love story involves Judith and Waltheof's daughter Matilda, who marries a Norman, Simon de Senlis. This is a book about people who actually lived so their romances aren't necessarily going to be of the fairy-tale, happy-ending variety. They are entertaining and satisfying to read, however, and Chadwick ends her story at a beautiful place in the relationship between Matilda and Simon.

As for the historical aspects, the book spans the years from 1067 to 1098, so you're going to get a lot of historical events along the way in addition to the personal stories. There are struggles between the Normans and the English Saxons, political intrigue both internal and international, skirmishes and battles, and even the Crusades figure into the story, all told in an entertaining style with great attention to detail in describing life as it was in the 11th century.

Great reading, as always, from Chadwick.

Sarah says

This read like a Mills & Boon - a lot of heaving bosoms, flushed cheeks and muscular thighs etc. I was reading it while having my hair cut and kept having to hastily turn pages for fear of embarrassment should my hairdresser happen to read anything over my shoulder. I was quite surprised as I'd heard great things about E. Chadwick and was severely disappointed - however I'm told she has written better ones so I'm giving her ONE more chance to redeem herself and reading "The Love Knot" next.

Marg says

4.5/5

Oh no, I only have a couple of EC books left to read!

Marie Z. Johansen says

I'm not sure what it is about Elizabeth Chadwick's work, but it never fails to mesmerize me, and transport me back in time. When I purchased this book I was not aware that it was one that I had obviously had missed somewhere along the path of reading Ms. Chadwick's work. It was originally published in 2002. I can't imagine that I would have forgotten reading it when it was new!

This book follows the path of William of Normandy and begins with the year 1067 following the great Battle of Hastings. William the Conqueror is establishing his rule over Britain, and in doing so retains custody of many captured nobles, Earl Waltheof Siwardsson of Huntingdon being one of them. Although he did not fight in the war, Earl Waltheof retains his title but fights to regain his pride of place and his lands from William. Waltheof falls in love with one of William's daughters, Judith.

Reluctantly, after the threat of an uprising against him, William restores Waltheof's lands and grants him marriage to his daughter, Judith. In the years that follow, Judith feels that Waltheof is engaged in some activities that are contrary to his fealty to William, and, through familial treachery, Waltheof is executed. His eldest daughter falls in love with the man who is sent by William to take control of Waltheof's earldom, one by the name of Simon de Senlis, who had been a long time friend, and former squire to, Waltheof. He is also a person for Judith, Matilda's mother, holds no love.

Simon follows the Crusade, leaving Matilda behind to question his fate. Simon's first love had followed her husband on the Crusade trail until he is drowned. A dire injury almost takes his life, and Simon is tended to by his first love, who he had taken under his wing. During his convalescence they have a one time resolution to the desire that was founded in their younger years.

After his return from the Crusade, his first love becomes a nun, and Simon returns to his lands and his family. Simon and Matilda long for peace, a commodity that is difficult to come by during this turbulent time. Tension builds in their marriage, but the truth of Simon's "one-night-stand" comes out due to the birth of his bastard child; a child that Matilda must accept and raise in their home after she meets with, and grudgingly accepts, the confession of Simon's early love.

The epilogues for Ms. Chadwick's books are always one of my favorite parts. There she provides the history behind her stories. Much of what she writes is structured on solid historical facts, and I find it utterly fascinating the she "fills in the blanks" so convincingly. Elizabeth Chadwick is one of my favorite historical fiction writers and this book is a credit to her!

Anyone who loves historical fiction, British historical fiction, the history of William the Conqueror, or just a great read, will undoubtedly enjoy this excellent book!

Glenys says

I love medieval historical fiction and this is another good one from Elizabeth Chadwick. Totally believable, apart from the way both the women in the story are teenage virgins when they marry and despite having to be 'deflowered' on their wedding nights and have the bloody sheet displayed the next morning, their warrior husbands (one Saxon, one Norman) are considerate and skillful lovers who bring them to orgasm first time they are penetrated! Mmmm... not very likely methinks. These quibbles apart, an enjoyable and quite educational fiction.

Jennifer says

Set in 1067, with the Norman Conquest of England still a fresh and bleeding wound, this is the story of William the Conqueror's niece, Judith, and her marriage to the English nobleman Waltheof of Huntingdon. The story can be broken down into two parts, the first comprising of Waltheof and Judith's stormy relationship and the second part skipping forward a generation. Their daughter, Matilda, marries a man from her parent's past, Simon de Senlis. Their marriage is very different to Judith and Waltheof's, especially since Matilda strives to make it so. She is haunted by the ghost of her father and the failure of her parent's marriage and Matilda must learn to live with the past in order to create a better future for herself.

Just because this isn't one of my favourite Elizabeth Chadwick novels does not mean that it is not a beautifully written novel. Ms. Chadwick is a brilliant writer and this book is no exception, I just didn't "click" with the characters in the same way that I have with some of her previously read novels. Judith is a complex and contradictory character and I found her difficult to relate to, although I believe this may be because Ms. Chadwick wished to draw attention to her flaws so as to understand why her relationship with Waltheof was so rocky. They are portrayed as very different people with contrasting personalities that do not suit well together. Unfortunately in this novel we are shown that love doesn't always conquer all.

Mela says

The first axiom: Elizabeth Chadwick's historical fictions are **well researched, nicely balanced between historical details and an engaging story**. The way she describes scenes causes **I feel I am there, like I was in a room or on the battlefield**.

The second axiom: **She creates interesting characters**. With strengths and shortcomings, of flesh and blood. And it applies all characters, main, supporting and episodic.

Here we have two main pairs.

The first story was rather sad. Waltheof was a truly good man. One couldn't dislike him. He was cheerful and sympathetic and he fell in love deeply. I think almost every woman wants to be loved so much. But... sometimes love it's not enough. Sometimes people differs from each other too much. Sometimes the world crushes good people...

He took every man and woman as he found them, and in the end his trust was his downfall. He had no shield and they cut him down

The second story was more hopeful. They had to face many problems and build the bridge between their personalities to be able to find their happiness. But they did it! And their way was so... moving, real, fascinating.

The love stories in Chadwick's novels aren't stories of courtship. They are about creating/finding a strong, deep love which understands, forgives, supports.

The third axiom: Elizabeth Chadwick has an observant eye. Through her characters and their stories one can see how well she knows human nature.

'No use wishing to be like other folks,' the maid said shrewdly. 'You have to learn to live at peace within your own skin.'

P.S. All main (and probably all supporting) characters were historical figures. I have checked it now, the story of Waltheof of Huntingdon was almost the same as the known real version. But Chadwick changed a little the story of Simon and Matilda. Essentially, it was similar to the real one, she changed only dates of some events and so on.

The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says

Seriously, Elizabeth Chadwick pushes all my historical happy buttons and this one made me do a happy dance. She's got such a wonderful way of bringing these characters to life, flaws and all. Chadwick would make one hell of a history teacher. And while I loved reading about the medieval period, I still wouldn't want to live in it. Okay, maybe somewhere like Constantinople or parts of the East where they did practice decent medicine and sanitation. On the other hand, all the strictures placed on women do not sit well with my modern sensibility, though it is interesting how women used what they had to wield power in their own right. Poor Waltheof. What a fate for a good yet flawed man.
