



In Winter's Shadow

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Arthur Pendragon strives to unite a fragmented empire as his bastard son threatens to tear down the king, his queen, and their bravest champions. From the sudden death of innocence to a perilous campaign that strikes at the very heart of the empire, this third and final book of the acclaimed trilogy by Gillian Bradshaw offers the reader a front-row seat as Arthur's dream and his kingdom collapse around him.

In Winter's Shadow Details

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From Reader Review In Winter's Shadow for online ebook

Howard Wiseman says

The darkest, most realist, and best (in my opinion) of Bradshaw's Down the Long Wind trilogy. Unlike the earlier two novels, magic hardly makes an appearance here, and the focus is not on Gwalchmai (the Gawain character) but on the classic Arthurian love triangle, and the downfall of Arthur's kingdom. Gwynhwyfar (Guinevere) is narrator and protagonist, and the most well developed character. Being a history wonk, one of the things I appreciate about Bradshaw's novels is that she is meticulous in her timeline, even though she gives no absolute dates (although it is possible to make a good guess as to what they are.)

Mel says

Not as good as the first two books in the trilogy. Told from Guinevere's point of view. I suppose it isn't Gillian Bradshaw's fault that Guinevere and Bedivere are selfish and weak. Halfway through this book I was starting to admire my daughter's resolve in refusing to read any further King Arthur tales. "There doesn't seem to be any good reason to do so. I know they are going to end badly."

Richard Derus says

Rating: 4* of five

The Book Report: The last days of Camelot as narrated by Guinevere. Arthur lost in battle, Gawain and Mordred at daggers drawn over the death of Gawain's beloved son, death comes for all in the epic Battle of Camelot...Guinevere dies to the world by becoming a nun, and later the abbess of her nunnery. In this book, Guinevere's rupture with Arthur comes because she dishonorably attempts to rid the kingdom of horrible Mordred, not because she dallies with Lancelot. Frankly, I like this version a whole lot better because it makes internal sense to me, being the way I would expect Guinevere to have behaved based on her established character. Guinevere then reflects on the crash-and-burn of her hopes and Arthur's to save some small corner of the world for Roman knowledge and enlightenment. She sees, at the very end of her life, the Irish monastic ark that preserves a tiny fragment of Classical culture for the ungrateful future, and rests herself easy at last.

My Review: This is a reissue of the 1981 YA title that formed part of Bradshaw's first major commercial success. I got the book as part of the Goodreads First Reads program.

Bradshaw uses the Britonized spellings of the well-known characters' names: Gwynhwyfar, Medraut, Gwalchmai, none of which I felt comfortable with until about halfway through the book. She has a real gift for the characterization of these people, unlike some Arthurian follow-ons. She makes each of the people who come forward in the narrative into a very real presence. It's a lot of work to make a character consistent internally, but she does it, and despite the fact that she didn't have to because the characters are already so well-known.

This is book three of a trilogy. Frankly, it shouldn't matter much if you read them in order because I assume

you're at least passingly familiar with the legend on which the books are based. Still, in order, the books are *Hawk of May* as narrated by the eponymous Gwalchmai or Gawain, being the story of his rebellion against his terrible mom Morgan le Fay/Morgawse, and service to her detested bastard half-brother Arthur; *Kingdom of Summer*, the tale of Gawain's penance for seducing the daughter of a king he was on Arthur's embassy to, and the death of his rotten mother at the hands of his big bully brother; finally this book.

Pam Baddeley says

This is the third and final volume in the Arthurian retelling by Gillian Bradshaw, which has a post Roman Britain setting. Unlike the earlier books, this switches focus away from Gwalchmai (Gawain) and is told in the first person point of view of Arthur's wife, Gwynhwyfar (Guinevere). Also, unlike the others especially the first, this story includes no overt magic: the only lingering traces are the acknowledgement near the end of the presence of Gwalchmai's 'magical' horse of the Sidhe and his unearthly sword, both introduced in book 1 but not playing a part in this volume.

As the story opens Gwynhwyfar is worried about the problems building up at Camlann (Camelot). The end of volume 2 saw the ominous situation when Medraut (Mordred), Gwalchmai's younger brother and a reputed sorceror, arrived at Camlann and began to undermine the unity that Arthur had established with such effort. Gradually, the fact that Medraut is the child of incest and that his father is Arthur (ignoring the fact that Arthur was tricked by the sorceress Morgawse, as he didn't know she was his half-sister), begins to come out through Medraut's whispering campaign, alienating the support of allied kings and some of Arthur's own followers.

Medraut's insinuations also target his older brother Gwalchmai, and armed conflict breaks out as Arthur's 'band of brothers' begin to split into factions and individuals from each side fight duels over Medraut's accusations. Gwynhwyfar only succeeds in driving a wedge between herself and Arthur when she resorts to drastic action (view spoiler). Gwynhwyfar's role puts her under immense pressure: she is, in effect, head administrator of the camp with the responsibility for making sure everyone is fed and clothed and that there are supplies of everything needed by several hundred people. This, together with the emotional angst from her estrangement with Arthur, drives her into the arms of his right-hand man, Bedwyr. (In this retelling, there is no Lancelot, presumably because his character was developed in Medieval French songs and literature, and therefore was not an original component of the Arthur legend.)

The rest of the story is more or less as per the Arthurian legends with all the tragic fallout. The story itself is so well known that the interest in reading an Arthurian novel is in the way the author develops the characters and makes the story understandable in human terms, despite its unlikely elements. For me, the hopeless affair of Gwynhwyfar and Bedwyr failed to convince. Their behaviour came across as a sort of lovelorn teenage angst. The fact that they both knew it would lead to the destruction of everything for which they had worked, as well as the terrible betrayal of someone they loved - Arthur - and had even been warned of such by Gwalchmai, made their behaviour unbelievable. As previously developed - Bedwyr features even in the first novel - both are noble, self sacrificing people. Yet to continue their affair when Bedwyr has already had to fight a duel to deny the rumours spread by Medraut only makes sense if both are selfish - which we're told they are not: they just can't help themselves. In younger people, this might have been believable but Gwynhwyfar is thirty-eight, well into middle age by the standards of the period, and Bedwyr, who must be about the same, has previously shown deeply held religious beliefs as well. They might have lapsed once, given Gwynhwyfar's low ebb at Arthur's rejection, but to keep on doing it when the situation is escalating into obvious danger - Medraut and his gang watching their every move - doesn't add up.

The other problem with the book is its deadly dull pacing for the first three quarters. It dragged and was an effort to read, more or less from the outset. It only picks up when the two lovers are caught and even then, really only at the point where Gwynhwyfar escapes to Arthur's camp after her conscience drives her to accept the punishment she feels she deserved for her betrayal. The final 100 pages or so are much better paced and have some good confrontation scenes with Medraut and his followers, plus the unfolding of one tragedy after another. The short Epilogue has a tacked on feel, as it attempts to show there is still one ray of hope against the darkening which followed the loss of the dream of Camlann. The book was heading for a 1-star review, but its final quarter means that overall it has earned 2-stars.

Kat Hooper says

3.5 stars, Originally posted at Fantasy Literature. <http://www.fantasyliterature.com/reviews/in-winters-shadow-gillian-bradshaw/>...

In Winter's Shadow is the final book in Gillian Bradshaw's DOWN THE LONG WIND trilogy, an elegantly written historical fantasy about King Arthur that's inspired by the Welsh legends. While the first two books, Hawk of May and Kingdom of Summer, have focused on Gwalchmai (Sir Gawain), this last novel is written from Gwynhwyfar's perspective. You certainly don't need to read the previous books to fully appreciate In Winter's Shadow, but if you're a fan of the time period or the legends, you'll probably want to read Hawk of May and Kingdom of Summer at some point. They are lovely historical stories.

In In Winter's Shadow, Gwynhwyfar gives us some of the history of the Roman Empire and its relationship to Britain. She tells of how when Rome left, the petty kings of Britain squabbled amongst themselves and were in danger of being overrun by the Saxons until Arthur declared himself emperor and forced them to unite. She also gives some of her own backstory — how she hates women's work, prefers to study, and was her father's pet. She spends her days working tirelessly to advance Arthur's kingdom while he's away on campaign. She runs her household, manages supplies for Arthur and his soldiers, and extracts taxes from the petty kings and the church. It is hard to deal with a war-torn country, plotting kings, and resentful clergy.

Gwynhwyfar desperately wants a child who will be Arthur's heir. So far she has miscarried the children she's conceived. She fears that Arthur will divorce her, but he refuses. She is jealous of Medraut, Arthur's bastard son whose mother was the evil Morgawse. Medraut's presence at Camelot reminds Gwynhwyfar of her barrenness. It frustrates her that Arthur has a son out of that hateful relationship with his stepsister, but can't get one out of love with Gwynhwyfar. Medraut is still disrupting the unity of Arthur's band and Morgawse haunts Arthur and Gwynhwyfar's relationship. Thus, Morgawse, even though she's dead, still threatens to bring Arthur — and all of Britain — down.

All of this is a lot of stress for Gwynhwyfar, which explains why she makes a couple of REALLY BIG mistakes, and why we, the readers, feel empathetic toward her even as we realize she's being REALLY STUPID. The consequences of Gwynhwyfar's sins are severe and instead of making Arthur's reign more secure, she ends up destroying everything.

Though the story is slow and repetitive at first, In Winter's Shadow eventually takes off and becomes quite compelling. Gwynhwyfar faces several moral dilemmas that are just as relevant today as they were back then. Is murder ever justifiable? What about adultery? When our leaders fail to act, when is it okay to take matters into our own hands?

In Winter's Shadow is tragic and painful. It's a disaster story. It's the story about how well-meaning people

can royally screw things up. It's about the end of personal relationships and the end of an empire. Gillian Bradshaw succeeds in making both seem equally tragic.

Once again, I listened to Nicole Quinn's narration of the audio version. She has such a beautiful voice and I especially liked her in this book because it's told from a woman's perspective.

Deborah Pickstone says

Oh dear....it's all over. All 3 books consumed and done. It was a pretty wild ride! And to think she wrote this trilogy by 26 at best! Absolutely a great new take on the Arthurian legends and absolutely one of the best executed versions as well. A fabulous writer. I tend to have prejudice against Gwenhwyfar, myself, and this third book is from her viewpoint; I have read it and feel perhaps less annoyed by the general character than I did.

Highly recommended to Arthur fans :)

Juan Gallardo Ivanovic says

In Winter's Shadow reveals the last part on the Down with the Long Wind trilogy. Gwynhwyfar has been Arthur's wife for long, managing the whole of the day-to-day tasks and activities in Camlann but she also sees the coming threats that are beyond such activities. After allowing Medraut to enter Camlann, he gains influence in the Family and becomes a large power even without revealing his secrets. As Arthur's becomes more concerned by this fact, she will feel isolated and she will try to find solace in Artur's best friend: Bedwyr. They both don't know that their passion will lead them into tragedy and destroy everything that they once believed.

-----COMMENTARY MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS-----

Well, we went far with this trilogy. I was expecting a different approach on this book, but it wasn't. This time the story is told by queen Gwynhwyfar (Guinevere) and she is a decent storyteller but I couldn't stand her way to think and act. I would have probably choose another character as Rhys o Bedwyr as narrator this time (or maybe Gwyn, that would be awesome). The good thing is that she is directly involved with the situation, so we have a first hand report of what is happening. We also see in some parts that she is brave too, daring to risk her life and honor to correct what is wrong.

On this book, we assist to the fall of Arthur's reign as Medraut's influence is growing. The main cast acknowledged this situation, but failed short to prevent further spreading of Medraut's power and even when they tried, they won't get any closer to defeat him.

Basically, we assist to a struggle between powers and Arthur's faction decreases momentum as Bedwyr's and Gwynhwyfar's treachery deals a low blow into The Family's morale. Furthermore, as they are tried and found guilty, they will escape to Less Britain, killing Gwyn in the process and giving no chances to Arthur, but capturing them. Then a war will begin between Less Britain and Arthur. This is the perfect setting for Medraut's grabbing the imperial seat meanwhile Arthur's forces are fighting in the continent.

Medraut returns as main antagonist being cruel and revealing his true nature by acquiring the purple cloak (by force). He is the direct responsible for Gwyn's death and Gwalchmai suffering, aside for preparing the plot against Arthur's. He will come dying to Ynis Withrin to Gwynhwyfar, who will tell him about Gwalchmai's death and closing the full circle. As he dies, another age for Britain will come.

This book has good points such as when Gwalchmai discovers that Gwyn is his son, the affair is revealed, Gwyn's death, Gwynhwyfar returns to Arthur, Gwalchmai's and Medraut's deaths. We also are witness that Arthur's body is never found and his death is not explained.

The bad is that, as the story is told by Gwynhwyfar, I found it less engaging: there were some day to day details that I didn't find relevant and there were adding pages to the story. By the middle of the book, things gains more weight and are better. I also felt that Gwalchmai ending wasn't the proper as he began the trilogy. I was expecting something a little bit different, more epic and emotional. A description of the battle between Bedwyr and him, shouting their miseries to each other's face. Instead, we have a partial account of what happened, heartfelt but partial.

Bottom line, the book concludes the trilogy that began very brightly and ended well, not a master piece as it should, but decent enough to close the series. Recommended to all Arthur's fans.

Em says

If you know Arthurian lore, then you don't need to worry about spoilers in this review because Gillian Bradshaw's *In Winter's Shadow* is the definition of by the book. This final installment in her Arthurian trilogy feels like it belongs to an entirely different series than its predecessors. *Hawk of May* told the origin story of Gwalchmai ap Lot, better known as Sir Gawain. *Kingdom of Summer* gave us a similar coming-of-age treatment of Gwalchmai's servant, Rhys ap Sion. But although the action in *Kingdom of Summer* was filtered through Rhys's narration, there was no doubt that Bradshaw was telling Gwalchmai's story and using his family to represent the conflict between Light and Dark. Considering that the source material has been around for centuries, there have been comparatively few stories focused on Gwalchmai/Gawain, which makes Bradshaw's decision a refreshing narrative choice.

Spoilers to follow.

In Winter's Shadow follows the pattern set by its predecessors and introduces a new narrator, Queen Gwynhwyfar, to show us another side of court. The problem is, it's actually a side Arthurian fans have seen all too often: the love affair between Gwynhwyfar and Bedwyr, a stand-in for Lancelot. There's nothing wrong with retelling a classic story—we wouldn't know about King Arthur today if the legend hadn't been rewritten over generations—but there needs to be something new, some reason why readers shouldn't just pick up White or Malory. Substituting Bedwyr (Bedivere) for Lancelot and Gwalchmai's son Gwyn for his brothers Gareth and Gaheris is not a substantial enough change. Bradshaw's previous novels found that reason in Gwalchmai, but he's an ancillary character here.

What if he hadn't been? The relationship between him and Gwyn far outshines the one between Gwynhwyfar and Bedwyr. So does the relationship between him and Medraut, which is mostly off-screen here. I can only imagine what they talked about for hours after Gwyn's death. It makes me wonder what could have been if this novel had been narrated by Medraut, someone who obviously would have a different view of Arthur's court than the previous narrators but is more closely related to Gwalchmai's story than Gwynhwyfar. It would have been daring but perhaps too at odds with Bradshaw's dichotomy of Light versus Dark (a supernatural conflict that is almost entirely neglected here). As it is, having Gwynhwyfar as narrator dilutes the brothers' relationship and makes Gwalchmai's last words and Medraut's tears at his death feel unearned.

Bradshaw's adherence to legend leads to some contrived character choices. The ostensibly wise Gwynhwyfar and Bedwyr come off as incredibly stupid for not ending their affair—likely because it didn't

feel like an affair of passion. Bradshaw does a fantastic job setting up the conditions for the affair without villainizing anyone, but she has a harder time showing (not telling) why Bedwyr deserves this unconditional love. This discrepancy is at its worst after Bedwyr accidentally kills Gwyn and begs Gwynhwyfar to run away with him. Her decision to follow him to Less Britain (France) makes political sense, but the ease at which she forgives him for Gwyn's death really makes her character come off as less sympathetic. It ties into one of the more questionable themes of *In Winter's Shadow*, that it is intent, not outcome, that matters. I'm not sure that applies when you kill an unarmed teenager in a move that singlehandedly results in thousands of deaths and societal collapse. But, so as not to impose modern morals on medieval works, we'll say manslaughter wasn't as serious an offense in sixth-century Britain.

That still begs the question of why Bedwyr had to recuse Gwynhwyfar in the first place—why she didn't simply ask to be sent to a convent. Even if she couldn't raise the point in court, she easily could have asked Gwyn or Gwalchmai to convey the message to Arthur. And did no one think it was a bad idea to send Gwynhwyfar back to Camlann under the control of the man who brought about her ruin?

Luckily, Gwynhwyfar and Bedwyr don't have a monopoly on stupid decisions—Gwalchmai makes the uncharacteristic demand for war with Less Britain after his son's death. To be fair, Gwalchmai's need for vengeance is entirely understandable. But for him to refuse personal vengeance in favor of a war that can only benefit the person who was (arguably) responsible for Gwyn's death? Told from Gwalchmai's point of view, this decision may have been a compelling inner conflict of the Light and Darkness that still plague him—the emotional climax of the series. Told secondhand, it's drained of any emotion and reads like a foregone conclusion.

As a result, when Gwynhwyfar gives her monologue at the end—"Not only is it all lost, it was we who lost it, we who by our own stupidity and weakness allowed ourselves to be divided"—it does not come off as profound. It has readers nodding their heads because it highlights the major flaw of the novel.

If you've never read an Arthurian story, you might enjoy this one. Bradshaw has an excellent grasp of history, and her writing style, especially the dialogue, mimics the language of the time period while still feeling modern. If only she had used this mastery to finish Gwalchmai's story rather than diverting to the tired royal affair. *In Winter's Shadow* is a shadow of what it could have been.

Laura Hartness says

First published in 1982 and now reissued by Sourcebooks Landmark, Gillian Bradshaw's *In Winter's Shadow* is the concluding volume of the Down the Long Wind trilogy. An Arthurian tale, this series focuses greatly on those surrounding the legendary High King and Emperor. In Book 1, *Hawk of May*, the story's emphasis is on Arthur's emissary Gwalchmai and his ascendancy from childhood to royal servitude and respected combatant. Book 2, *Kingdom of Summer* still has Gwalchmai as the main character, but it's told from the perspective of his manservant, Rhys. *Summer* chronicles the rising tide that began to swell against Arthur, as well as the personal relationships of Gwalchmai, Rhys, and their love interests.

Book 3, *In Winter's Shadow* varies in that it's told from the perspective of a woman, Emperor Arthur's wife Gwynhwyfar. Through Queen Gwynhwyfar's eyes, we watch the continued struggle of Arthur and his Family against the forces of evil, brought on predominantly by his bastard son, Medraut. The Queen is very much a part of this struggle herself, as she is not only a leader within her community but is incredibly affected by events without and within. While her loyalty ultimately is always with Arthur, her heart is

frequently torn between what is right and what is desired. This leads to trouble both within her marriage and throughout the entire kingdom.

The longest of the three volumes, *In Winter's Shadow* took the shortest amount of time for me to read. I found every chapter to be quite interesting, and not bogged down in unnecessary set dressing and descriptive language. Bradshaw's writing is such that we are easily transported to this Arthurian world, but without excessive baggage. There are battles without ridiculous amounts of gory details, passionate anger without cheap vulgarities and adulterous love scenes with just enough information to get the point across. It's decidedly less spiritual than the first two thirds of the trilogy, and I missed having more of that element within the plot, but the political intrigue and relational dramas more than made up for that change in composition.

Down the Long Wind is different from other Arthurian tales in that there is no "Round Table" per se and no mystical Merlin character (although there is a briefly mentioned, mysterious bard named Taliesin). The fortress of Camelot is the more traditionally named Camlann. However, much of the original legend is retained, with a moderate amount of magic and spirituality within the first two thirds of the trilogy. This last portion, *In Winter's Shadow* follows the travails and struggles of Arthur, his Queen and the forces swirling around them. There is adventure, betrayal, loyalty, passion, victory and defeat. It's a sweeping tale that spans decades and easily transports the reader to another time and place.

I can say that I wish the final chapters had turned out somewhat differently than they did. Without offering any revealing details, the conclusion is not tied up perfectly in a tidy bow, with all parties happy and gratified. That being said, I felt that matters were handled in a highly realistic and possibly more historic fashion, if there is any truth to the Arthurian legends.

In Winter's Shadow is a fine conclusion to a very satisfying trilogy. I enjoyed hearing the story from the perspective of a woman, and Bradshaw always made her narrative interesting and worth my time. I frequently read this volume during my morning and afternoon walks by a lake, on the way to or from dropping my sons off from school. I always looked forward to that time, as it was a delightful escape from the duties and responsibilities of my day. I certainly recommend *Down the Long Wind*, especially if you're a fan of Arthurian novels, but also if you enjoy a captivating, sweeping tale of adventure, magic, love and political intrigue. Gillian Bradshaw produced a fine work 30 years ago, and it is certainly worth its current re-emergence in the marketplace today. Hopefully it will acquire a new audience and continue to be enjoyed for years to come.

Nikki says

There are very few Arthurian retellings that truly make me feel sorry for Guinevere/Gwenhwyfar. I'm not entirely sure that this is one of them, but it made me cry, so perhaps it must be. It's a painful read, this last book of the trilogy. Gillian Bradshaw spares the reader no pain: these aren't legendary characters, but for the space of reading, real people, and I grieved for their hurts and mistakes and the way they got swept away in circumstances. I'm not sure I liked Gwenhwyfar and Bedwyr, by halfway through the story, but I pitied them. I even grieved over Medraut's death, when he heard of Gwalchmai's death.

(There are no spoiler warnings on this, because I judge that the deaths of Medraut and Gwalchmai are well enough known that it would be a bit like putting a spoiler warning on something about the eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii. I've seen people request one, but it seems ridiculous to me.)

Bradshaw's retelling is a powerful one, and it brings the characters to life. It's also a painful one. I don't find much hope in it, despite the epilogue. The Light goes out at the end, trampled under a cavalry charge.

Sarah Edwards says

The thing about Arthurian legend books is that for them to be written well they are often bitterly and heartrendingly tragic. This one was no exception. A powerful story told through the eyes of the heart of the storm itself, it will pull at your heart. I'm not sure why I continue to read the Arthurian legend books, knowing already how they'll end, but *In Winter's Shadow* is an excellent conclusion to Ms. Bradshaw's series. The characters were well fleshed out with only rare instances of feeling a bit flat. There were times where I felt that some scenes were disconcertingly abrupt and could have benefited from a bit more exposition to keep them from feeling somewhat *deus ex machina*, but on a whole I devoured this book. It definitely left me with that bittersweet sadness at the inevitable conclusion.

Michelle, the Bookshelf Stalker Queen of the Undead says

I requested this book in the giveaway for a friend. She wanted it and wouldn't you know it, I won it. This is the 2nd time I've won a book for someone else (how's that for luck..hehe). She finally read it and loved it. I asked her for her rating and she said 7 stars (huh?), I finally figured out she was talking about a 10 star rating scale (ok, so she doesn't rate books often). I then asked her out of 5 stars, so she said 4. I'm not going to question her math skills and I'll go with the 4.

Ozymandias says

I was really hoping that this book would continue the winning streak from *Kingdom of Summer* but - alas! - it's borrowed the problems of *Hawk of May* and mixed them with the few problems that developed after and then threw in a whole new set. Making Guinevere the protagonist was a *huge* mistake. Think about it: what is her role in the Arthurian mythos? Does she really do anything? Is she ever at the center of events? The main enemy is and always has been Mordred. Guinevere's just a distraction. Her peripheral role means that we're treated to the same extremely irritating narrative device from book one, wherein all the action happens offscreen and Guinevere simply hears about it with the reader. Such vital moments as the Battle of Camlann, where Arthur and Mordred are both doomed to fall, are seen through warriors returning from the battlefield. This is the climax of the book (or it should be) but our POV character isn't even a witness to it. She just tries to clean up the mess.

So what does Guinevere actually do? Exactly what you'd expect. She carries on an affair with Bedwyr (replacing de Troyes' Lancelot), gets caught, and is used to tear the Family (Knights of the Round Table) apart. In this retelling she's even stupid enough to carry on the affair while known villain Mordred's in the court telling everyone about her and Bedwyn. The romance is weak. You can see why Gwen would be lonely. Arthur's an empty shell of a character, for all that he's supposed to represent perfection and decency. But Bedwyn doesn't come across as a very likable person and their insane tryst makes far less sense when divorced from the overpowering motifs of fate and courtly love that underlay the original myths. I know that love can make people stupid, but this is *really* stupid and never seems to carry any real emotion beyond a bit of pity. Neither Gwen nor Bedwyr come off well from this. It's hard to make someone like Guinevere

sympathetic since giving her any sort of agency means making her selfish and spoiled, unless you can find a way to make Arthur problematic. And everyone wants Arthur to be a paragon. About the only time I've seen Gwen work as sympathetic and proactive is in *Excalibur*, where Gwen's ambitions are believably and frustratingly undermined by Arthur's unimpeachable loyalty and humility. Even then it takes an entire book for her reputation to recover from her doomed affair.

Aside from the tedious romance that takes up most of the narrative, the main plot is about Medraut undermining Arthur's empire from within. He's able to build up an alliance of friends and win over many of Arthur's men. Peace is a hard thing for warriors to bear, and now that peace has been won people are looking for some new conflict. It's not too far off from the legendary dissolution of the Round Table. But it's a hard thing to dramatize. Medraut's scheming occupies the first part of the book (before the affair) and is basically just repeating the same proddings at the cracks in Arthur's authority and slanders against his character. They never leave Camlann and nothing really changes.

The magic that annoyed me so profoundly in the first book is completely gone now. Gwen's not a very magical character and she really doesn't have much to do with Gwalchmai, who's this series' only real source of magic. Medraut, who *is* an evil sorcerer, limits himself to honeyed words and the occasional poisoning. I can't say I really mourn its absence, but it feels bizarrely pointless to have had it in the first place. It also leads us to a profoundly unsatisfying resolution of Gwalchmai's story. Nothing is resolved, the supernatural battle vanishes away, and neither his magic horse nor sword serve any purpose or role in the resolution. For a series that has so far revolved around Gwalchmai it's a poor return for our earlier investment.

Gaele says

AudioBook Review

Stars: Overall: 4 Narration: 5 Story: 4

Carrying the story forward, the story is now told by Gwenhwyfar or Guinevere as more commonly known. Bradshaw has managed to bring us to the end of days for Camelot, with the final battles, the death of Mordred, Gwalchmai's death and her own roles and guilt for her part.

Again managing to re-invent the story of King Arthur using Bretonized forms of the names and presenting unique perspectives on the events, with points of view that were left untold or unimagined in the originals, Bradshaw has managed to neatly pull all of the threads together and wrap this series with a conclusion that is both refreshing and satisfying.

What stands out prominently for me is Bradshaw's ability to present her characters in a way that both feels unique yet holds true to their own internal dialogue as they explain, tell and share their parts of the story. From Gwalchmai's guilt about his lost love, to the very well-reasoned and completely real sense of 'what is right' that Gwenhwyfar presents as she wraps up the series, this reads as if the characters are real and palpable, giving readers the ability to commiserate, empathize, learn from and enjoy each person as they appear.

Narration is again provided by Nicole Quinn who manages to present the arcane and archaic place and character names with a smoothness that never falters. That is a quality of major importance, as the names and

places are often tongue twisters, and the flow of the story would be greatly impacted if the pronunciation faltered or varies. Additionally, her narration of the many moods of Gwenhwyfar, and the addition of simple adjustments in accent, tone and pace as she presented the other characters not only were easy to distinguish, but added to the enjoyment and impact of the story. Touches of Wales and Scotland, as well as a bit of the 'Northern' accent all add to the story, and her seamless transitions in this well-produced performance are a wonderful addition.

I received an AudioBook copy of the title via AudioBook Jukebox for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Arthurian Tapestry says

When I started the "Down the Long Wind" trilogy, I would have placed it as one of those series that proves rewarding after one has gotten through the other modern Arthurian classics such as those by Mary Stewart and Rosemary Sutcliffe (to mention only two). But, having completed the last book in the series, I place Bradshaw right up there on the first tier. "In Winter's Shadow" is an Arthurian novel that stands out among the very best I have read. At first, I was put off by the choice of yet another point of view; I wanted the the story of Gwalchmai to continue and that of his humble servant Ryhs. Besides, there have been numerous third rate retellings of the story of Guenevere (here in this novel Gwenhwyfar) and it is Gwenhwyfar who now narrates the novel. Did we really need to go this route, after the first two wonderful novels? Yet, I need not have worried; the story of Gwalchmai and the cast we have met in the previous novels are all here and their story continues.

Bradshaw delivers not only the tragic but satisfying conclusion to the legend of Gawain, but manages to present us with an entirely believable Gwenhwyfar. This is thus far the most endearing, vulnerable, and frustrating Gwenhwyfar that I have read in any source to date. The novel had classic Arthurian characters, including Medraut-Mordred, move me in ways that other works did not achieve. This a novel about forking paths and how each act may lead irrevocably to another, but how in the end these characters face their destiny (Bradshaw stays faithful to the major structure of the Arthurian tragedy while still delivering a few surprises), and she does follow Mary Stewart's casting of Bedwr into the role of Lancelot—I'm not sure if any other writers have done the same.

Gwalchmai has a bit of the vengeful Malory touch, but it is difficult not to feel his pain, in light of the tragedy that he faces, and this is cemented in his statement, "...the laws promote justice to those who have been wronged, and to obtain justice in such a cause I would go to the ends of the earth; I would take no blood-price, and spare no life in the world for pleading or claims upon me." More of this, I will not say, but I have always found that the best Arthurian retellings are those that do not skew to the ennobling or preference of one character at the expense of all the other characters. This is a very human and grey novel.

This novel accentuates the conflict by looking at it from sympathetically from characters on all sides of the conflict. The story of Arthur, Gwalchmai, and Gwenhwyfar comes to that end that we have all come to expect from the legend, but how she gets us there is utterly enthralling. Of course the Mordred figure is the villain, but Bradshaw reminds us how he became one and gives us a surprise at the end.

This is a series that now sits proudly in my Arthurian library in hardcover editions (some of the paperbacks suffer from some horrible artwork choices). I also switched between Kindle and Audible editions of these

books and will do so again in the future. The audible narration by Nicole Quinn is first rate with very few technical glitches (such as the repeating of a phrase here and there).
