



The Wandering Fire

Guy Gavriel Kay

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In the second novel in Guy Gavriel Kay's critically acclaimed Fionavar Tapestry, five men and women from our world must play their parts in a colossal war, as the first of all worlds confronts an ancient evil...

After a thousand years of imprisonment the Unraveller has broken free and frozen Fionavar in the ice of eternal winter. His terrible vengeance has begun to take its toll on mortals and demi-gods, mages and priestesses, dwarves and the Children of Light.

The five brought from Earth across the tapestry of worlds must act to wake the allies Fionavar desperately needs. But no one can know if these figures out of legend have power enough to shatter the icy grip of death upon the land--or if they even want to...

The Wandering Fire Details

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Author : Guy Gavriel Kay

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From Reader Review *The Wandering Fire* for online ebook

Lindsay says

This review is from my reread of this series in 2015/16.

The middle volume is often a let down in trilogies. I would argue that this one is anything but a let down. In this one the Arthurian myths get weaved into the story, although they had been foreshadowed in the first book. We also get the results of Jennifer's violation and rescue from the first book with the birth of the new andain Darien. Of the five visitors to Fionavar from the first book it's only Kevin and Jennifer's roles that hadn't been set out and both have big roles to play here. There's much more on the themes of sacrifice and power as well.

In many ways this is my favorite book in the series, partly because of the desperate acts of bravery. Vae's simple declaration that Darien will need a lot of love when she finds out his parentage. Arthur's complete acceptance that he will fall in the coming battle and why that is just. Kevin. Matt Soren at the climactic mage's battle. Even poor Gereint and his lost travels over the sea he has never seen.

We also get to see Gwen Ystrat and much more about Jaelle's priestesses. I'm a little conflicted about the representation of female power here, mainly because it's all tied into blood, mystery, sex and sacrifice, but I think it needs to get a pass in that it *is* female power, and that's largely lacking in these books.

Still one of my favorite series of all time.

Manju says

Sad, heartbreaking and full of surprises, this book was a wonderful journey.

Bradley says

I've been falling into and out of this book in almost precisely the same way I had in the first. I love the short lyrical descriptions, I enjoy the mythic references, and I especially love how each character eventually gets woven into each of the underlying story structures. There is a great deal to love in these books, and I've enjoyed tracing much of the straight-line continuation of style from this fantasy novel into the types that have enjoyed much fame and popularity in the eighties and nineties.

But I'm going to be very honest with ya'll. It just wasn't for me.

There's very beautiful language, assuming you love pastoral (and glacial) story progression, filled with enough oohs and aaaahs to stun every romantic bone in your body. This is what it is, after all. A romance. It's turning war into romance, rape into romance, summoning undead into romance, and all it's missing is Spenser's *The Fairy Queen*. Oh, wait... there's even some of that, and *Le Morte d'Arthur: King Arthur and the Legends of the Round Table*, too.

I'm not saying that sexuality is the key to the tale, although there is plenty of it that makes magic either powerful or weak or unimportant. I'm saying that this novel is all about the romantic frame of mind.

If you like novels that gloss over the grimdark features of life, speeding through epic battles to focus on the epic heroics, or wallow in the myriad build-ups that are there to push the fully-engrossed reader into a paroxysm of legendary legends legending the legendixed legendonier, then you're in good hands.

I just couldn't get into it.

I finished it, and I'll do the next in the trilogy because I'm willful like that, but I just can't get all starry-eyed with a build up of prophesied and lost babies, the idea that women are the true strength behind their heroic men, (Why can't they be their own heroes, exactly?), or the fact that we've got not only a lantern hung on a specific character here (view spoiler), but an entire lighthouse hanging on his neck like an albatross.

What do I mean? Even Kay knows he's cribbing the legend so much that he doesn't even bother to submerge the meme into any of his characters. He just brings him back through a universe-spanning curse and forces him to replay both his deeds and his lost love story as penance, nearly fourth-wall-breaking borrowed pathos, and the Weaver's serendipity.

The fact that Jennifer/Guinevere was fairly interesting doesn't spoil the fact that the rest of the novel was a slogfest for me. I really wanted to like it a lot more than I did. I tried liking it repeatedly as I was reading it, giving excuses to myself, tracing all the mythological elements and revelling in it, even trying to summon a truly heroic effort in my heart to like Paul, our resident mage, as he learned to walk the spaces between life and death, tickle fish, and beat back winter.

I have no complaints about the mythos. It's beautiful how Kay brings in so many cool elements, such as the basic connections between winter and death and summer and life, including the greater and lesser mysteries, and how it all interwove into the defeat of the Wolf.

If the novel had the speed and excitement of modern novels, I'd have been rocking hard to this.

As it was, it felt so old-fashioned and pedestrian and mild and old hat that I wanted to cry and plead that I had just read this novel too late in my life, that I have already read too many great novels that explored all these themes too well, that the characters just weren't strong enough to make up for that fact, or that I am, in the end, sad that I'm just an asshole.

These are just my opinions, of course. I might not really be an asshole. I'll leave that to others to decide.

Sarah says

DNF at 47%. I just can't do it. I'm bored and I don't like the humans in Fionavar scenario. I'm dreading picking it up, so I'm calling it quits. :(

YouKneeK says

[our main characters from Earth back home after Kim brought them back in the process of rescuing Jennifer. At the beginning, they're trying to find a way back to Fionavar, among other things (hide spoiler)]

Nikki says

By this point in reading the trilogy, you've probably decided whether you can bear with Guy Gavriel Kay's style or not -- whether you can be invested in his characters or not. If the answer is yes, then carry on: he won't disappoint you. If not, then... I don't think he will get your attention at all.

Less seems to happen in this book until the end: it's a time of waiting, of things coming together. If you're invested in the characters, though, there's plenty to worry about: Kim's dilemmas, whether she has a right to do what she's doing; Paul's separation from humanity; and Kevin's initial helplessness, and then his journey to the Goddess... And there's Arthur, of course, and the Wild Hunt, and Darien...

Yep, and if you were wondering, I really do mean Arthur. King Arthur. I love what Kay does with his story, with the image of his tapestry -- but I can't say more because I'd plagiarise my essay, again. My academic life needs to stop getting in the way of my fannish meta, ugh. Suffice it to say that Guy Gavriel Kay nods to the Arthurian tradition whilst creating something entirely his own.

Not the strongest of the three books, but still beautiful.

Wanda says

What can I say about book two that won't be too spoiler-y for book one? I guess I can say that there is more of the same. The world of Fionavar is locked in an unnatural winter, caused of course by a Mage-gone-wrong. What can the forces of good do against the very winds of winter?

King Arthur is the Eternal Warrior, needed for any possibly-world-ending war. The five wayward Canadians who have found their way to Fionavar have also proven why they were selected by fate to make the transfer to that world. There is pain and there is happiness.

I can't quit reading—finished *The Wandering Fire* last night and barely paused before starting *The Darkest Road*. I think this series is going to become part of my “nursing home library,” those books that I intend to take with me to the nursing home when such a move becomes necessary.

Stephen says

5.0 stars. This is an incredible book and part two of an incredible series. Guy Gavriel Kay is one of the best

writers working in any genre and his writing is both technically superb and deeply emotional. This series should definitely be on the "must read" list of any fan of epic fantasy.

Highly recommended!!

Meredith Holley says

Okay, this story finally got me. Fiction takes life and crystallizes it. It boils down and simplifies, so that when real life is too overwhelming, I can remember what to filter out and what to hear. I can remember that the pining lovers reunite, the little girl grows into wisdom, the white horses win. The double-edged part of that sword is that it's probably not true, it probably shouldn't be true. But, sometimes stories don't need to be true in order to be somehow necessary, I guess. I was in the right mood for this book. I was in the right craving of escape, craving of simplicity. I know this story isn't all good guys winning all the time, but it still organizes good and evil and love and hate and family into something manageable.

These are my random thoughts about the story: (view spoiler)

So, I really love the story of the rake prince and the princess from the south. I guess I love a rake, and a rake finding his girl, and all that. I just like that story. I like the idea of guys appearing careless to cover up their own passion and perfection. It's a failing, but I'm a sucker for it. I also like that the couple likes each other and are basically nice to each other except when it makes sense for them not to be. And it's nice that the story has come around to make the fighter girls (the priestess and the princess) respectable or endearing, rather than threatening or psycho like I felt they were in the last book.

I'm still feeling like the girls keep getting the short end of the stick, though. (view spoiler)

Ultimately, I am not totally comfortable with the typical fantasy format that assumes an enemy's physical characteristics mark the enemy as evil. That just seems like propaganda that leads to race wars. It is comforting to read, though, when real life is so opposite of that kind of simplicity. I guess that's one of the reasons it's called fantasy.

Jackie says

This, the second novel of the Fionavar Tapestry trilogy, was truly amazing. The blending of Celtic mythology and Arthurian legend was artistry.

Vivid imagery and spectacular storytelling, this is Epic Fantasy at it's very best.

Best image: Diarmuid singing in battle. So very Celtic.

Best fight scene of all time: In Chapter 15, on the Plains near Adein. It surpasses any and all fight scenes of

the myriad books I've read. It'll stay with me for a long time.

Everything about this book is fantastic and Kay is an impressive author. If you love Epic Fantasy, The Fionavar Tapestry is not to be missed.

Sotiris Karaiskos says

Στο δε?τερο μ?ρος αυτ?ς της τριλογ?ας ο Guy Gavriel Kay μας δε?χνει το μεγαλ?τερο ε?ρος του συγγραφικο? του ταλ?ντου καθ?ς η εξ?λιξη της υπ?θεσης του δ?νει την ευκαιρ?α για να δε?ξει αρκετ? περισσ?τερο λυρισμ?, ε?τε μιλ?με για την περιγραφ? των επικ?ν πολεμικ?ν κατορθωμ?των, ε?τε για τις συναισθηματικ?ς καταστ?σεις ?που εμπλ?κονται οι ?ρωες μας. Μπορ? να πω, μ?λιστα, ?τι σε αρκετ? σημει?α το βιβλ?ο αποκτ? μ?α μυστηριακ? ατμ?σφαιρα που θυμ?ζει ?ντονα βιβλ?α της Marion Zimmer Bradley. Απ? κει και π?ρα ?σον αφορ? την ?δια την ιστορ?α περν?με σε μ?α φ?ση της ?που υπ?ρχει αρκετ? δρ?ση καθ?ς ο π?λεμος εν?ντια στις δυν?μεις του σκ?τους ε?ναι ?δη σε πλ?ρη εξ?λιξη, κ?τι που αφ?νει πολλ?ς υποσχ?σεις για ?να συγκλονιστικ? φιν?λε.

Mike (the Paladin) says

This is the second in a trilogy (The Fionavar Tapestry as you've already noticed). I noted in the review of the first volume that I tried to read these some years ago and really couldn't get into them.

Without giving any spoilers (something it can be difficult to accomplish and also say "why" you think or feel what you do about a book) this one stays (for me) in the "middle ground" area. I didn't dislike it, but I didn't really get into it either. I found my interest waxing and waning throughout. The story is "somewhat" constructed around the Arthurian Legend or maybe I should say a version of the legend. That is obvious. I can also see heavy influence from Tolkien here (not a bad thing, in some ways I'd like to have seen more of it). This is definitely a book that fits into the "high fantasy" end of the genre but,(by the way, I love "good" high fantasy) I can also see influences from other writers who aren't "usually" thought of a high fantasy. There are some things that strongly put me in mind of Roger Zelazny for instance.

So, Thomas Mallory, J.R.R.Tolkien, other fantasy influences. You'd think I'd be enthralled, but I wasn't. The best I ever accomplished was, "mildly interested".

Will I run down the third volume? Probably at some point, but I have a lot of books waiting and I don't think I'll rush it to the top of my "to be read" list.

3 stars.

Jane Jago says

Review to follow when third book read

mark monday says

the second book in the Fionavar Tapestry is not quite as impressive as the first, but hey it's still pretty damn good. two things in particular stick out for me:

Sex. i love how this novel places sexuality at the center of much of its magic, both implicitly and explicitly. it is really refreshing. and not corny! i suppose that is the danger of including sex in fantasy - if its not done right, it is a trashy sex scene or, even worse, an eye-rolling tantric experience featuring new age nonsense that makes me gag. sexuality in this novel is mysterious, natural, unnatural, a profound part of some magic, a threatening form in other kinds of magic, and just a regular part of life as well, no big deal. it is taken seriously but it is also not turned into the whole point either - it is an important part of the tapestry, so to speak. it is a refreshingly adult perspective.

Rape. at the end of the last novel, a major character was captured, tormented, and raped repeatedly. it was a horrifying sequence and also exceedingly, surprisingly well-done. i have actually never read its like before in a fantasy novel - i was horrified while simultaneously impressed by the language, by the ability of the author to remove all traces of potential, repulsive "sexiness", by the way the author showed how the raped character retained her strength while never shying away from how truly negating the experience was, in every way imaginable. in the sequel, Jennifer does not just bounce back. it is not an easy journey for her and she doesn't try to make the people around feel better as they try to comfort her. in a way, reading about Jennifer took me to a sad place, as i recalled the couple friends i've known who were assaulted sexually, and the struggles they lived with for so long after, and probably still live with to this day. Jennifer's character and her struggles seemed so true, in particular her detachment. and when she at last is able to make a faltering step, then another, and another, on the road to recovery, and when she's finally able to even experience sex again, to experience a connection to another person that is both emotional and physical... it was like seeing something slowly coming through in an endless gray sky, some light at last appearing, after waiting for so long. that's a trite image, i know, but that's how it felt to me. i teared up a little bit reading that scene, and i think that's the first time tears have ever sprung to my eyes when reading something so basic as a love scene.

Alexandra (matobookalo) says

Φανταστικ? ?πως και το πρ?το! Γρ?γορη πλοκ? και χωρ?ς να κουρ?ζει. Σ' αυτ? το βιβλ?ο ?μως μπα?νουμε πιο βαθι? στην ψυχολογ?α των ηρ?ων και καταλαβα?νουμε καλ?τερα τις κιν?σεις και τη συμπεριφορ? τους! Περισσ?τερα εδ?: <http://bit.ly/2j6ebIE>

Thanos says

Η Περιπλαν?μενη Φλ?γα συνεχ?ζει και συμπληρ?νει επ?ξια την ιστορ?α που ?χει γρ?ψει ο Guy Gavriel Kay. Το δε?τερο αυτ? βιβλ?ο της σειρ?ς, αν και μικρ?τερο σε μ?γεθος, ?χει περισσ?τερη δρ?ση σε σχ?ση με το πρ?το ειδικ? απ? τη μ?ση και μετ?.

Η αλ?θεια ε?ναι ?τι το πρ?το μισ? του βιβλ?ου κυλ?ει πολ? ομαλ? και ?ρεμα (με εξα?ρεση λ?γες σκην?ς) αλλ? απ? εκε? κι ?πειτα γ?νεται ?νας πανικ?ς. Ο συγγραφ?ας περιγρ?φει ?ψογα ?λες τις

μ?χες και τα συναισθηματα των ηρωων και δεν σε αφ?νει να ηρεμ?σεις μ?χρι και την τελευτα?α σελ?δα. Β?βαια ο?τε και τ?τε ηρεμε?ς ιδια?τερα καθ?ς με τον τροπο του σε προσκαλε? να διαβ?σεις και το τροπο βιβλ?ο της σειρ?ς το συντομ?τερο δυνατ?v.

Γι αυτ?, χωρ?ς να θ?λω να φαν? αγεν?ς προς τον συγγραφ?α, ?ρχεται στα χ?ρια μου «Ο πιο σκοτειν?ς δρ?μος»...

(view spoiler)

Carmine says

In bilico fra i mondi

"Seppellirai il tuo dolore nel profondo dell'oceano. Ma le onde non si lasciano domare così facilmente. Verrà un domani in cui piangerai per me."

"Ha camminato verso la Dea per tutta la vita."

Prosegue la lotta contro l'invincibile signore delle tenebre, latore di terrificanti promesse e con un figlio pronto a vegliare la sua futura eredità.

Fionavar rende onore all'imponderabilità della vita, senza giudicare le scelte e i percorsi intrapresi per raggiungere una propria maturità e consapevolezza.

Si abbraccia in maniera totale il libero arbitrio: liberi di poter scegliere tutto, anche il male, con il doloroso passato ad ammantare il presente e la speranza di un futuro migliore.

Mayim de Vries says

It is a truth universally acknowledged that while not all who wander are lost, those who mashup the Lord of the Rings with the Arthurian Legend, wander into their impending doom.

As you know for me **The Summer Tree went promptly beyond fantastic and straight into the epic category.** My initial awe was even strengthened by the opening pages of The Wandering Fire. The previous instalment finished with the most brutal sequence sealing Jennifer's fate in Fionavar, cut (and cauterised) by the crossing back to our world. What Jennifer does in the beginning of the Wandering Fire as a response to the evil that has marred her mind, body, and soul is beautiful. More than beautiful, for it is a defiant answer to hate, to death, it is transforming destruction into a wild hope, even if choosing life seems daunting and impossible, and, quite frankly, unnecessary heroics. (view spoiler)

Events that occurred in the previous instalment were like a three-night long overture to the events taking place in this book. Rakoth Maugrim, the powerful Unraveller, has been set free and if Fionavar loses to him, then eventually all the world would fall and the Tapestry be torn and damaged beyond redress. The waiting is over. **But then, as they say, shift happens.** Arthur Pendragon enters the scene with all his retinue of anguish and drama.

Excuse my Latin, but I have to ask: why the hug?!

This is my main problem with *The Wandering Fire*. **Why would you feel the need to supplement the lush Tolkienesque universe with another literary topos, at least as rich and complex as the Middle-earth? Fionavar has had it all:** the dwarves and the elves (lios alfar), the orcs and uruk hai (svart alfar and urgach), the kingdom of Gondor (Brenin) and the riders of Rohan (the Dalrei), Been and Luthien (Lisen and Amairgen), Sauron (Rakoth) and Saruman (Metran), the Fellowship (the companions), the myths, the legends, the courage and beauty and light. In other words, an abundance of archetypes, tropes, and themes of which each alone could suffice for the whole book. **Additionally, Kay has added his ingenious touches,** like the Lord of the Summer Tree or the mage and the source system. **Why would you bring, to this already overcrowded picture, another universe of characters and references with their own dynamics and arcs?**

While the beginning of the book was everything I hoped for, **the Arthurian mashup, reduced the pleasure significantly. The Wandering Fire still possesses the brilliance of its predecessor:** the elegant and lofty style (everyone is beautiful, and graceful, and wise and virtuous), action, drama, mystery, magic and suspense, **but at the same time, it becomes too much.** At tad too much. **Just like a dress with too many sequins that was meant to be a bold statement and instead becomes tacky.**

Perhaps one needs to be a lover of Avalon in order to truly appreciate it. Alas, don't count me in. I couldn't care less. My irritation was like a pebble in a shoe, a constant feeling that something is not right made it easy for me to concentrate on other imperfections. And so, page upon page, **instead of enjoying myself, I grew restless.**

The random sex scene featuring Loren and one of the other main characters was the last straw, decisive when it comes to rating. No. You cannot have Gandalf and then send him on one-night stands just because everybody deserves some stress relief. Once again, I have to say that **in spite of Kay's sheer brilliance his approach to sexual relations is downright perplexing.** I had similar issues in *Tigana*, and even more problems in his other ovrks. It is not a one-timer, it's one of his recurring themes. Also, something that shaves the second star off the rating.

I am sad to write this, but I don't think the majority of the readers will be happy with *The Wandering Fire*. **You need to love both all things Tolkienian and all things Arthurian in order to truly appreciate it.** My guess is that such people exist, but are not too numerous. If you'd like to start your journey with Kay, try *Tigana* first or, if you are more historical-fiction minded reader, the Sarantine Mosaic duology set in Byzantium-like world: *Sailing to Sarantium* and *Lord of Emperors*.

Also in the series:

1. *The Summer Tree*
 3. *The Darkest Road*
-

Markus says

A good sequel, although not as good as the first book in the trilogy. It suffers from a slight case of second-book syndrome, there is not the same sense of wonder as in *The Summer Tree*, and I did not enjoy the introduction of the legendary characters at all.

However, it's Guy Gavriel Kay. It's still beautiful and highly enjoyable. It's just not on the level it could be.

Robyn says

I can't really put my finger on what it is that I'm loving about this series. I can name the faults at length (but I won't) and I don't feel that I **should** like this as (gasp) I dislike both The Lord of the Rings and The Chronicles of Narnia, both of which seem to be major influences,, and yet! Totally enamoured.
