



The Straits of Galahesh

Bradley P. Beaulieu

Download now

Read Online →

The Straits of Galahesh

Bradley P. Beaulieu

The Straits of Galahesh Bradley P. Beaulieu

West of the Grand Duchy of Anuskaya lies the Empire of Yrstanla, the Motherland. The Empire has lived at peace with Anuskaya for generations, but with political turmoil brewing and the wasting disease still rampant, opportunists from the mainland have begun to set their sights on the Grand Duchy, seeking to expand their empire.

Five years have passed since Prince Nikandr, heir to the scepter of Khalakovo, was tasked with finding Nasim, the child prodigy behind a deadly summoning that led to a grand clash between the armies of man and elder elemental spirits. Today, that boy has grown into a young man driven to understand his past – and the darkness from which Nikandr awakened him. Nikandr's lover, Atiana, has become a Matra, casting her spirit forth to explore, influence, and protect the Grand Duchy. But when the Al-Aqim, long thought lost to the past, return to the islands and threaten to bring about indaraqiram – a change that means certain destruction for both the Landed and the Landless – bitter enemies must become allies and stand against their horrific plans.

Can the Grand Duchy be saved? The answer lies hidden within the Straits of Galahesh...

The Straits of Galahesh Details

Date : Published April 3rd 2012 by Night Shade Books

ISBN : 9781597803496

Author : Bradley P. Beaulieu

Format : Paperback 572 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, High Fantasy

 [Download The Straits of Galahesh ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Straits of Galahesh ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Straits of Galahesh Bradley P. Beaulieu

From Reader Review The Straits of Galahesh for online ebook

Chris says

The Straits of Galahesh is the second in Bradley Beaulieu's "The Lays of Anuskaya" trilogy. I had a look at the first book in the series some time ago, and found it to be a rather original take on epic fantasy, with inspiration from contemporary struggles and from the Russian literary tradition.

Those themes continue in the sequel. We get to see a bit more of Beaulieu's world this time around. Alongside the renaissance urbanity of the duchies, there's also some time spent looking in on their near neighbour, the Empire of Yrstanla. The Empire feels like a far larger polity than the Duchies, with sprawling borders that are in a state of constant flux – battling with the seemingly barbarian Haelish, and, more recently, looking covetously at the overextended Duchies, now roiling from the events of the first book, and not greatly prepared for strife with their neighbour.

This is an Empire built on blood and gold, with a firm eye for realpolitik, and a tendency to both institutions and violence. They're an interesting social contrast to the squabbling Duchies – if seemingly less diverse, the more absolute power of their Emperor allows him to get the Empire rolling in one direction with a relative minimum of fuss.

There's a fair amount of heavyweight politics in this volume – mostly settled around the marriage of one of the Duchie's own to one of the more important nobility in Yrstanla. There's a lot of half-said sentences, and more than a little scheming, especially from the Matra on the side of the Duchies – the women who can utilise a form of astral projection to act as spies and saboteurs. They are, as yet, unable to access the Empire, in part due to the storm wacked Straits of Galahesh – and they'd dearly love to have eyes on the other side. The Yrstanlan's, on the other hand, would very much like to get their hands on a Matra of their own – information being power. Cue rather a lot of shenanigans, and an atmosphere which is more than a little redolent of the Cold War – each side trying to gain an advantage over the other, in time, resources, or information.

From a character standpoint, we're all over the place. Some of the time we're looking in on Nischka, Prince of one of the Duchies, now looking for a cure for the spiritual disease wracking the islands – also known as the Wasting. He's put his other responsibilities on hold for this, and in trying to discover more about the rifts which seem to cause the disease. This is a cooler Nischka, one with something less in the way of prejudice, challenged by the events of the last book to re-examine his role in society, and the way in which that society portrays those around it.

We also get some time with Soroush, leader of the insurgent force known as the Maharrat. These outcasts from their pacifistic people, who suffer somewhat from the prejudices of the Grand Duchy, make a great contrast to the rather staid Duchy-dwellers. Soroush is an intelligent, driven man with a history of personal tragedy – and his clashes with Nikandr are rooted in what both see as being on the right side of their ideals. In any event, Soroush's energy courses through the narrative, and galvanise it on the occasions when it lulls a little.

The Al-Aqim from the previous book serve as something like antagonists. Two of the three individuals who shattered the world centuries ago, they're now in search of the pieces of an artefact which allowed the, to do so. Mullaqad is the more energised, the more direct, with a sort of bluff honesty mixed with a disturbing knack for cruelty when masked as necessity. Sariya, on the other hand, weaves her way between the words on the page, her presence felt in influence, rather than seen, her words coming from the mouths of others. Quite what they're looking for their artefact for is obscured, at least as the text begins – but they're certainly

willing to throw everything they have into doing so, and doing some terrible things to make sure that they succeed.

The plot, much like the Russian saga's it seems to take a tradition from, is dense. Thick with names, and with plots and counterplots. There's a lot of introspection here, a lot of people trying to decide what to do, and rather less of them actually doing it. The pacing for the first two thirds feels a little slow as a consequence – but it certainly picks up in the back third, and the conclusion is fast-paced, compelling, and carries with it all the emotional investment for which the slower portions laid the groundwork. It's not a quick read, but it is one which will make you think, and feel, and ask questions.

On that basis, it's a decent read; I'd say you'd have to come at it after reading the first book in order for it to really make sense, and if you do so, be aware that it's laying out threads for the concluding volume to pick up and run with. It's heavy going at times, but is also a good read, and will replay your investment in the series.

Will says

More of the same from Anuskaya. While The Straits is much a continuation of The Winds, everything flowed a bit more smoothly. The locations felt more real, more magical. The plot even seemed more realistic.

I'm looking forward to the conclusion.

4/5 stars.

Annalisa says

It would be four stars if not for the Russian terminology I previously mentioned.

Ryan says

I just can't seem to get into this series. I'm not sure what it is but it took me forever to read this book. I think the setting is pretty cool(Russian islands with windships). I liked some of the characters(Nikandr, Ishkyna). I think maybe the magic system was kind of confusing for me and might have been the cause of me not enjoying the book as much. But I have the third book and will read it to find out how it ends.

Abbe says

I am really enjoying this series, the world is rich and imaginative, the characters are well thought out and interesting.

To me it feels like Nikandr & Atiana will be like Richard & Khalan in The Sword of Truth Series where they

will love each other but never see a moment's peace. Perhaps not entirely the same, but in the way that feels like a train wreck you can't stop watching. Not that I am looking for a romance novel, there is always that hope for found happiness.

Regardless, anything else to say has already been said in the reviews I read and I am looking forward to mre

Matt says

I hate giving up on series but I think I am shelving this one. I may or may not come back to it one day. I just couldn't get in to this and kept finding excuses not to read.

Paul Genesse says

I just finished reading The Straits of Galahesh by Bradley P. Beaulieu for the second time. Wow, I love this book. It's the second novel in the Lays of Anuskaya trilogy and is epic fantasy at its finest. The Winds of Khalakovo, book one, was awesome, and this one (set five years later) is even better.

This series is a cross between George R.R. Martin's Song of Ice and Fire series (you know HBO's Game of Thrones, right?), and Ursula LeGuin's Earthsea series, but with a Czarist Russian flavor.

I really enjoyed the sword fights, ship-to-ship canon battles, and all the gunfire--with muskets of course. There is also a Persian influence (The Aramahn) and in this book we get a Turkish-like culture, led by the Kamarisi (the emperor), who is the most powerful man in the world, and is the overlord of the freezing, windswept islands where the Anuskayan (Russian) culture lives.

The Kamarisi is going to crush the islanders and take over, unless the heroes are able to find a way to prevent war. There is also the problem of the wasting disease and the rifts that are opening all over the world, slowly destroying it and threatening the ley line trade routes that the windships use to navigate from island to island.

The worldbuilding is top-notch, and the strength of the setting really anchors the book and makes it feel real. The characterization seals the deal, and I was swept up in the turbulent winds that blast through this novel leading to an epic conclusion that left me wide-mouthed and in awe.

Few finales are as remarkable as in Straits. Beaulieu (pronounced: bowl-yer) writes three character threads and they come together brilliantly and go in unexpected directions. There is a serious body count in this book, and no one is safe. The large cast of secondary characters is painted expertly, making you care, then they are . . . well, killed off with gusto. Sigh.

All the action keeps you riveted to the rich, detailed, and unfolding storyline, and the fascinating world. As the book goes forward the confrontation between the Kamarisi, the Anuskayan islanders and their windships, the powerful Sariya and Muqallad who are trying to tear open the rifts, and our protagonists, Nikandr, Atiana, and Nasim build and build until the mystery of the rifts and the antagonists plans are slowly revealed.

This is an expansive story told through the eyes of three main characters. Nikandr Khalakovo, heir to the Duchy of Khalakovo is one. Atiana Vostromo, a strong woman and princess who will do anything to save her people, even if it means sacrificing her love for Nikandr, and Nasim, a teenage boy who is the reincarnation of a man who once wanted to bring about the destruction of the world.

In Straits, Nikandr is trying to stop the rifts from spreading, as they are tearing the world apart. He is a dynamic and complex character and his chapters are my favorite. He spends a lot of time on the amazing windships and I very much looked forward to Nikandr's chapters. He is actively trying to save his islands He is in love with Atiana, and their first chapter together will leave you in shock.

Atiana is one of many strong female characters in this series. Her chapters, especially the ones where she goes into the drowning basin and her spirit wanders the aether, are incredible. In Straits she has become a Matra, and her abilities to navigate the aether make a huge difference in the book.

The third story thread belongs to Nasim. He is the reincarnation of Khamal, a master of the elemental magic, who along with his two friends, Sariya and Muquallad, wanted to bring about a tremendous change in the world. Nasim/Khamal, Sariya and Muqallad, are the reason the rifts have begun to destroy the world and it is they who have brought about the Wasting disease that has claimed the lives of so many, and ruined the land itself.

The Nasim chapters are the most challenging to understand, and the most obtuse. Not all of them are hard, but the memories/dreams that Nasim has of his previous life are purposefully hard to decipher. Luckily there are many Nasim chapters side by side, so you can understand them better and get into a flow with them before Beaulieu switches to another storyline.

The Nasim chapters are written in such a way that you will mostly understand, but this series is not spoon fed to you. It made me think hard and sometimes I had to just pass some things by and hope I figured them out later. Even Nasim didn't understand it all, as he struggled with remembering things from his previous life as Khamal. He's a very interesting character, and he's like a villain who is turning over a new leaf in a new life. He's young (a teenager) though he really has the experience of a much older person buried inside him, but he is impetuous and kind of annoying with his stubbornness at times. He doesn't like what he did in his past life, and escaped that life to fix things that he did in this one. A hard road to follow.

Understanding this book can be a challenge, but the glossary in the back is a lifesaver. When I was stumped, I would look at it and be reminded of what I'd forgotten. There are a lot of unfamiliar names (Persian, Turkish, Russian) and they don't stick in my mind that well, but the glossary helped a lot. Also, there is a great summary of book one before chapter one, which really reminded me of what had gone before, as it had been a year since I read Winds.

It was great being back in this world, and one of the big features in this book is The Spar, a bridge that will connect the two halves of the island of Galahesh (from the book title). The Spar made my imagination soar. It would be an awesome painting, golden light reflecting off the titanic arches that connect the sheer cliffs on either side, and the raging sea beneath.

So much of the imagery in this novel blew me away and Beaulieu is a very gifted writer, worthy of the accolades he's achieved and all the great reviews. He's attempted an extremely ambitious trilogy and book two delivers on the promises made in book one. The Winds of Khalakovo ([link to my review of Winds](#)) was an incredible achievement, and Straits makes it clear that Winds was no fluke.

There are a multitude of epic fantasies set in white, Medieval European settings, and if you're getting a little bored with those, and want a flavor you've never had before, please check these books out. I love how Beaulieu broke out of the mold and created such a unique world. I love the cultures, the windships, the

mysterious and cool elemental magic, and all of the action. Mostly, I love the characters, especially Nikandr, and Atiana.

If you'd like to take a ride on windships, see the amazing elemental magic of the Aramahn, fall in love with strong characters who drive the story, and lose yourself in a fantasy world the likes of which you've never seen before . . . explore the dangerous and mysterious Straits of Galahesh.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED by Paul Genesse

Author of the Iron Dragon Series & Editor of The Crimson Pact anthology series

View an interactive map of the Lays of Anuskaya World on quillings.com. Zoom in to learn more and watch little videos and much more, including Brad reading from his books. I've never seen a map as cool as this one.

View the book trailer or download the 15 chapter sample of book 1, The Winds of Khalakovo on Night Shade Books website: <http://www.nightshadebooks.com/cart.p...>

Shaun says

When I read the first book of the Lays of Anuskaya, The Winds of Khalakovo, I was struck by the authors world-building skills, first and foremost. The influences taken from our world were not the typical medieval European flare, but were more fitting for the Silk Road trade route during the time of the Great Game in the late nineteenth century. I loved the blend of Russian and Islamic cultural influences as well as the use of gunpowder technology. I enjoyed that Mr. Beaulieu could use such a technology and not have the whole story leave the realm of Fantasy and become a steampunk novel. I like the characters he gave to his readers but at the time I didn't become overly attached to them, except perhaps Rehada. My biggest complaint was a lack of full disclosure. I felt that so much of this lush world was being held back by a story that wasn't fleshing out as it should be. As if there were blinders on the side of my head keeping out the rest of the world. Due to the gracious nature of Mr. Beaulieu I was able to read his second book, The Straits of Galahesh. My earlier complaints have been dealt with.

I stated that the characters, while likable, had never given me much to become attached to them. That changed with this publication. Nikandr, who was kind of wishy-washy before, has become a hard man of principle. He possesses his own moral compass and becomes a bridge, unwanted at times, between the Maharraht and the Landed (people from Anuskaya) they despise so much. His captain skills are well tested in this novel, giving him the more heroic air of master and commander of his vessel. Atiana, who before was only head strong, actually became strong. Her skills at taking the dark, a sort of out body technique that allows one to manipulate worldly events, becomes as great as Nikandr's mother, Saphia. Her willingness to put herself in danger gives her a self sacrificing nobility. She thinks fast and charges faster. She becomes a true threat to her enemies and asset to her allies, which explains why devious powers within the story try to use her to their advantage. Nasim, who was a disturbed untalkative boy and therefore was more of a prop in the first installment, has become a young man exploring his power and destiny. Nasim wages a long and complicated intellectual and spiritual battle with the two remaining Al-Aqim, Muqallad and Sariya, who are semi-immortal beings attempting to force upon the world enlightenment, this is actually not a good thing. Nasim also drives himself to find answers to his connection to Khamal, the third Al-Aqim, which in part is found within a group of cursed children turned into demon like creatures. Doing this while trying to stop the other Al-Aqim paints him as an intellectual hero, who pits his life as well as his sanity against the powers of the Al-Aqim.

In this second volume the world of Anuskaya is expanded, it covers a much larger territory and introduces more players for the stage Mr. Beaulieu has created. There is a large empire, Yrstanla, that lies to the west of the Islands of the Grand Duchy. Imagine a Russian culture on multiple small islands similar to Iceland having to face down an Ottoman Turk like empire based on the mainland. Yrstanla mirrors such a Turkic Empire, in that it is organized well and has great technology at its disposal. It possesses Janissaries, which like the Ottoman version, are highly organized and of one mind, as opposed to the Grand Duchy whose troops come from the different houses of the islands. It possesses more windships, more guns and more people than Anuskaya does. They pose a great threat to Nikandr and Atiana's homeland.

There is also more information given concerning the Maharraht, what their motivations are beside a hate for the Landed, as well as identifying different factions within their ranks. The Aramahn people, whom make up the members of the terrorist group the Maharraht, believe that people are capable of attaining a state of enlightenment they call indaraqiram. Most peace loving Aramahn believe that this is an individual journey, while others, like the members of the Maharraht believe that all of the world could undergo this transformation, even if forced. Members of the Maharraht are forced to choose between supporting the Al-Aqim, who are/were Aramahn, or taking the sides against them. Helping them reach a decision is one of Nikandr's most trying tasks.

The Al-Aqim are really a new aspect to consider. While they were introduced in *The Winds of Khalakovo*, their importance to the story was not clear. In *The Straits of Galahesh* they become the main enemy of all things living. The Al-Aqim, including Khamal, are responsible for the state of the world. The rifts that are identified in the first book which are causing disease and famine are a botched attempt at an experimental religious ritual they initiated centuries ago. This ritual was to bring the whole world into the state of indaraqiram. Muqallad and Sariya, newly escaped from the island prison Khamal left them in, insist on finishing what they started, which will destroy everything.

The main focus of this second installment is to stop the Al-Aqim from finishing their experiment. Muqallad and Sariya manipulate the kingdoms to achieve their goals and it falls to Nikandr, Atiana, and Nasim to stop them from doing so. The way they can do this is to keep the last piece of a powerful stone, called Atalayina, out of the Al-Aqim's hands, but they have to do this in the middle of a war that has started between Anuskaya and Yrstanla. Amidst air battles with cannons and elemental magic these three separated heroes must find a way to end up at the same place and time as Muqallad and Sariya.

In *The Winds of Khalakovo* there were plenty of blood pumping battles taking place, between airships and musketeers. I found this style of combat refreshing for the fantasy genre, and was very pleased to see that Mr. Beaulieu added even more in *The Straits of Galahesh*. This time the battles are bigger, more encompassing, and more exciting. One of the main reasons for this is not just the windships and the descriptive nature of Beaulieu's writing, but the fact that all of his characters are vulnerable. Each of these heroes could die, each has fears and weaknesses, they are not the perfect warriors. Atiana tends to be too smart for her own good, over thinking some things. This leads to her falling for traps set by Sariya. Nikandr is always too trusting, putting himself and many of his crew in the hands of potential enemies. Granted, Nikandr does all this in the name of peace, but the risks still seem foolish. Nasim struggles with his confidence. He doubts himself when faced with questions posed by Muqallad. He second guesses his closest allies and places rifts between himself and them at the worst possible times. With each conflict I began to wonder if these scattered heroes would survive. Not to mention that the elemental magic featured in the first book is used once again with great effect, giving many of the characters an almost Last Airbender feel and upping the danger factor. The ability Mr. Beaulieu has to convince you that he might kill off his leading roles helps make for good reading.

The Winds of Khalakovo kept the reader on the Islands of the Grand Duchy, never letting you see beyond the sea that surrounds them. *The Straits of Galahesh* open up that closed door to reveal a more detailed world. Mr. Beaulieu planned this world unveiling well by wetting your appetite with the first book and then

providing a much bigger sequel, for the gravity of the conflict becomes greater with a larger world on the line. I am very pleased to have continued reading this imaginative new series and would recommend it to anyone who loves a good rich fantasy world. I think a few steampunk fans might like it as well. Also, like any good fantasy series, you can't start with the second book. So, If you have not read *The Winds of Khalakovo* go and get a copy and get caught up. If you have and are wondering if you should continue reading the series let me help you decide that, do it.

Matteo says

After reading the first book in the series with a lot of difficulties, I expected to enjoy much more this second one, because I thought that the exotic names, the complicated (at least for me) magic system and the even more complicate plot were now more familiar.

Unfortunately it was exactly the opposite and I really struggled to finish the book.

Actually being more familiar with the elements I listed above let me understand the real problem I have with the series: I do not like the main characters (all of them), so I am not interested in what happens to them.

The book is very well written, the setting is different from the typical fantasy books and the author can manage very well all the twists in the plot, which is also quite interesting.

So Mr. Beaulieu is a very good and interesting author and I will surely try his new series.

However I could not connect with any of the main characters in this one, so I soon lost interest in the story.

I am going to read the third and final book in the series mostly because I already bought it, but not immediately and to be honest without many hopes of liking it more than this one.

Paul Weimer says

My review at the Functional Nerds:

<http://functionalnerds.com/2012/03/a-...>

Brian says

Very good read, but is starting to get repetitive with the plot.. bad guys almost get what they want but are foiled at the last possible second.. Very good read though..

Josh says

After reading and loving *The Winds of Khalakovo* I had high expectations for *The Straits of Galahesh*, some of which were met and some not. The brilliant things about this book were so easy to overlook because they resumed seamlessly from where they left off in *Winds* and because of the confident manner in which

Beaulieu employed them.

The use of Russian culture and language was once again an absolute highlight, allowing this series to completely stand out from a genre that is all about inventing a plethora of original place and character names. Unlike *Winds*, I found I was completely across the entire cast of characters and even most of the duchies/islands/cities/mountains/palotzas, which I have to admit made the second installment in the trilogy a lot easier to maneuver through.

The world of Straits is not described with great depth, yet it is still incredibly rich and well built and like most elements of the series, fresh. Built into the geography itself is (one of) the magic systems that I also found intriguing - matriarchs of each royal family who can enter the aether, which along with the spires, assist with the flight of the airships.

The story crafted by Beaulieu in Straits is complex, original, captivating and successful on many levels, however for me there were some things that really let it down. I have to preface this by saying that I, or my reading and understanding, may possibly be to blame and I stand ready to be corrected!

It seemed to be that Beaulieu had some pretty big plot holes in this one - well, not so much holes as parts that were totally contradictory or made little logical sense. Of course we take into consideration that magic is, well, magic and in essence is mysterious and unexplainable. But that's no get out of jail free. Worst of all were some examples where Beaulieu *seemed* to demonstrate that he didn't have a real grasp over elements of his own story.

The role of the akhoz was always dubious. They were created to stabilise the rift over Ghayavand, but the theory behind this is never explained at all and they then became a multipurpose tool and carted out for this and that ceremony. Then there is a conveniently easy ritual between Khamal and an akhoz which has such a huge effect with very little reasoning behind it. Yet (without giving too much away) when Sariya and Muqallad perform the same ritual with Nasim (a choice in itself that has no logic) it has an outcome that does not align with Khamal's at all.

There are even just silly little things, like when one protagonist has to kill someone to achieve his goal, even though it is plain to every character in the scene that if he waited approximately 3.4 seconds longer, it wouldn't actually be necessary. It's OK though, because apparently everyone who is killed can be magically unkillable and keep living a little longer. Even more ridiculous is the fact that this protagonist develops the ability to stop time and somehow doesn't kill the bad guy who is an arms length away. But the bad guys can control anyone's mind at will ... they just choose not to sometimes ...

It's stuff like that that belongs in bad, overpriced Hollywood fantasy epics. It makes my blood boil.

Other than that I was still very confused about a few things, chiefly Sariya's true intentions and Muqallad's goals, but I think some of that came down to both my understanding of the text and Beaulieu's intentional vagueness (ie, saving it for later). There were a lot of twists and double-crossing which was great and made for a keep-you-guessing plot, but I don't feel like it was concluded very well.

While these provided some epic eye-roll moments for me, I still really enjoyed the essential story and craftsmanship of *Straits* and I was never even close to a moment where I was prepared to give up or anything of the like.

I'm now a total BPB fan and will be moving straight onto *The Flames of Shadam Khoreh* to finish of the series. I would totally recommend that all fantasy fans give this series a go, just be prepared for some irksome moments if you're an anally retentive want-to-know-it-all like me!

Sarah says

The Straits of Galahesh is a strong second book. Readers who enjoyed The Winds of Khalakovo will be sure to love this one. It isn't perfect, but it's a strong set up for what looks to be a promising finale to a unique, refreshing, and often surprising trilogy. Beaulieu's expansion of his world, characters, conflicts and magic system pays off in a big way. This is a book full of surprising twists and turns resulting in a high impact novel that will have you hanging on for dear life by the time it's ended. Regardless of whatever else I say, in the end I must tip my hat to Beaulieu's unique vision and his nearly flawless execution of it. This is one series to pay attention to.

Read my full review here:

<http://www.bookwormblues.net/2013/07/...>

Kaitlin says

So this is book #2 in the Lays of Anuskaya series and I am definitely still finding it to be a complex series. The influence of Russian-style names and places means that there's a hard adjustment period every time I try to read these, but the audiobooks really help to make me see what the names sound like and get way more immersed. (I read this as a buddy read with the lovely Jackie)

This story picks up a fair few years after the first book ends meaning that some of our character's lives have really changed/progressed. I liked the fact that this was done as it meant that the character I was most curious about Nasim, had had a chance to learn more about what he wanted/needed to do with himself, and I think this was essential for the plot to move forwards.

As in book #1 we have 3 major characters:

Nasim - a young man now who is still unsure about his true 'purpose' in life and is trying to do an impossible task

Nikandr - a prince of Khalakovo and the character I find most like a pirate, galavanting around in windships

Atiana - a princess who has some very great power in the aether and who is going to be vital in the next phase of the upcoming battle.

These three characters all start off away from one another and for the majority of the book are separated and spread out by various missions and ideals they are working towards. I liked that this was the case as I think it meant that the world was more open in this book than in the first, but equally it means introducing more new places and characters (something which is already a little tricky to keep track of).

I really liked getting to see a lot more of the magic within this book, I feel like in the first I didn't fully wrap my head around the magic, but with this one I definitely did and seeing the elemental spirits being used, bonded with and manipulated to do all sorts of powerful magic was great. I also really liked seeing more of Atiana's magic within the other world and seeing how she dealt with the rules and misconceptions there to balance her emotions and mind and memories and thoughts.

Generally I do think that the contents at the book is a must read to explain the magic fully (which I only discovered after finishing the book - oops!) so if you get the chance to flip back first, I'd say do so!

Overall this story was adventure in the skies, lots of battling, politics, ancient magics and the return of evil beings. I like all of these things and yet the complicated names do make this a harder read than if everyone was called names like 'Dave' for example. I'd say if you like battle in airships and crazy sky-pirates then this may well be a book you'll enjoy, just go into it ready to try and wrap your head around the complicated names too. 3.5*s overall!

Abhinav says

You can read the full review over at my blog:

<http://sonsofcorax.wordpress.com/2013...>

Bradley's Lays of Anuskaya series was on my radar this year thanks to all my Night Shade Books reading last year and it ended up going on my "25 Series To Read In 2013" challenge. When I read the first book earlier this year in February, I was quite struck with the scope of the world-building and with the characters. Not to mention the fact that I loved the (inspired-by) Russian setting, despite sometimes getting lost with the names and the familiar names. The Winds of Khalakovo is definitely one of my favourite books of the year and Bradley one of my favourite authors.

The second novel, set some time after the events of the first novel, goes further with the world-building and deals in concepts and cultures and locales that we did not see in the first book. That gets some automatic points from me, for sure, because I love that aspect in a second or third novel. Fleshing out the setting created and introduced in the first book is one of the most important things in a sequel that I look for, and Straits of Galahesh is enjoyable for that fact. But, some of the characterisation and the pacing did suffer this time around, so it wasn't as smooth sailing as the first book.

BradleyPBeaulieuAnuskaya02The one thing that I can say about this novel, unconditionally, is that it is a gripping novel. Yes, the pacing dips at times, and at times the characters just act weird, and what not, but the story still maintains your interest. It did for me. I just wanted to keep on going and going and not stop reading the book. In that respect, it is very much like its predecessor. Given that the characters all deal with the fallout of the events from the previous novel, and the fact that several new characters are introduced this time, there isn't a moment in the novel where you actually want to just give up on it, at least for a while.

One of my complaints with big fantasy novels is that at times they feel too bloated and it is easy to lose any interest in the reading of it. While Straits of Galahesh does feel bloated in a few rare cases, the central story is packed with enough mysteries and reveals to keep you going.

Given the world-ending themes and plots that were introduced in the previous book, we continue to see here how those revelations have changed Anuskaya now, some years removed from those fateful events. It makes for a really interesting reading experience since Bradley pretty much notches up the tension and scope of things by several degrees.

As the book starts, the various Dukes have to contend with a neighbouring nation that wants to either ally with them for its own benefit, or make war on them for that reason. This in turn leads to a strained relationship between the two protagonists, Nikandr and Atiana, who were to be married in the previous novel but their relations were ultimately called off because of some momentous reversals suffered by Nikandr and House Khalakovo.

Now, with this new threat on the horizon, Tatiana is given the option of marrying the errant neighbour king,

and it is something that she constantly rails against. So the really fun part of the novel is in seeing how Nikandr and Tatiana rekindle their romance and where they go from there.

Some of the scenes involving both Nikandr and Atiana seemed rather superfluous in the novel, and I think could have been better if they had been just cut. They were all basically resets of a status quo because of certain plot twists that seemed rather random. This happened especially with Nikandr in the second half of the novel, towards the end when the story is just about to get into the climax. These were weird moments at best and made me wonder if they had been added in for the sake of adding plot twists rather than anything genuine.

Other than some more minor quibbles on characters, that very element still remains one of the strongest elements of Bradley's writing, in addition to his thorough and complex world-building. We see a whole lot more of the various magic systems that are used in Anuskaya and each of them has its own charm and what not, which I loved. Incredible diversity here.

Even the action scenes were a step up from those in the previous novel. They were much more detailed and better choreographed, all of which went towards making for a better reading experience. The ship battles in particular were thrilling affairs.

Overall, there are some unwelcome drops in quality for this series with Straits of Galahesh but at the same time, it was still a far better read than some that I've read in the last two years. And I'd recommend it. It needs the context of the first novel to be appreciated fully, and that was helpful for me in retrospect since I did have the experience from the first novel.

Onwards and forwards, I should be reading the third and final book in the series quite soon.

Rating: 8/10
