mythprint

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Guest of Honor Review

Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World by Verlyn Flieger. Eerdmans trade paperback, 167 pages, 1983. Reviewed by David Bratman.

The 1980s were the era of specialized studies in Tolkien criticism. After the groundwork of basic critical understanding had been laid by earlier works by Paul H. Kocher and others, scholars turned to studying Tolkien through particular lenses to see what they could learn. We had the Marxist analysis of Tolkien, the Jungian analysis of Tolkien, the folklore-motivic analysis of Tolkien, and many others. Most of these were interesting enough on their own grounds, but they said little that was really about Tolkien and his works: their lasting significance and what the author meant to tell us.

At least two of these books did go beyond that and say something important about Tolkien and his works. One was T.A. Shippey's philological analysis, *The Road to Middle-earth*. The other was Verlyn Flieger's *Splintered Light*. Both of these books are now out of print in the U.S., unfortunately, but they both are worth reading; and as they received some of the notice they deserved, they can be found in most large college and university libraries. Now that Prof. Flieger, who teaches English at the University of Maryland at College Park, will be Guest of Honor at the upcoming Mythcon XXV, it is worth taking a look at her book *Splintered Light* to see what it has to say.

The heart of Splintered Light is a thorough survey of The Silmarillion, examining the book from the perspective of the extended antithesis between good and evil as represented by light and darkness. Light derives ultimately from Eru Ilúvatar as mediated through the lights of the world: the Lamps of Arda, the Two Trees, and finally the Sun and Moon. Darkness is the rejection of light, exemplified by characters such as Morgoth and the Avari. Some characters are fully identified with

the light or the dark, but most have elements of both mixed together in their being, and the mixture of these opposites is generally unavoidable in a fallen world which the dark seeks to dominate and destroy; thus, splintered light. Flieger traces this pattern through plot, characterization, and the word-meanings of the Elvish languages.

Two important points here. First, although ■ Splintered Light was not the first book on The Silmarillion, it was the first general critical book on Tolkien to focus primarily on The Silmarillion, on the unchallengable grounds that as that epic was Tolkien's life work, it will say the most about what was important to him as an author. (Flieger notes the controversy over The Silmarillion's success as a work of fiction, but that is beside the point here.) A single chapter applies the splintered light theory to The Lord of the Rings. Flieger's ability to absorb The Silmarillion and expound on its meaning lucidly made her a pioneer in the current era of Tolkien studies, an era in which The Silmarillion and the other posthumous Elder Days material must be confronted directly by any critic who wishes to understand their author. At the time Flieger wrote, only The Silmarillion and Unfinished Tales were available of Tolkien's posthumous fictions. The History of Middle-earth books had not been published yet, but she makes some shrewd guesses as to the nature of their contents.

Second, Flieger builds up an impressive theoretical basis for her analysis. This is outlined in the first three chapters, which for me are the most impressive part of the book. First, she presents Tolkien as "A Man of Antitheses": joy and sorrow, happiness and despair, victory and defeat, are opposites but were inextricably mixed in Tolkien's character. This mixture was, in fact, his character, and it is vital to comprehend this in order to understand him. Then she applies this to Tolkien's own theoretical writings, in particular the *Beowulf*

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

FLIEGER REVIEW — Continued from Page 2

essay and "On Fairy-Stories", and explains its relationship to his concept of eucatastrophe. Nor does Flieger neglect Tolkien's most important preoccupation, his interest in language. I was especially pleased that she notes the importance of the essays "Chaucer as a Philologist" and "Sigelwara Land". Flieger's most brilliant stroke is to bring in Owen Barfield's Poetic Diction to tie together the linguistic and splintered-light strands of the book. Tolkien is known to have read Poetic Diction and to have been very impressed by it, and, of course, the two men were acquaintances through the Inklings. Flieger quotes Barfield as saying that Tolkien's concept of sub-creation evinces a greater community of mind with himself than anything in the philosophy of C.S. Lewis does.

Flieger does an excellent job of concisely summarizing Barfield's theory of the ancient semantic unities, which holds that in ancient times there was no separation between what we now call the literal and symbolic meanings of words. Various ancient words such as logos in the Gospel of John did not have the separable meanings of "word" and "cosmic harmony" that we now translate them by, but had a special meaning that incorporated these and other things together at once in an inseparable way. To separate out these meanings, to lose the ancient unity, is to splinter language. Tolkien's task as a writer was to attempt the recovery of our awareness of the unities and mythic resonances of language, and to find the resolution of antitheses. Verlyn Flieger's achievement as a critic is to describe this task, and to increase our understanding and appreciation of Tolkien's work by doing so.



Poetry Corner

This poem was generated by entering Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky", from *Through The Looking Glass*, into an Apple Newton. Nonsense words in the original were each written three times to get the most consistent match.

TABLESPOONS

Teas Willis, and the sticky tours Did gym and Gibbs in the wake. All mimes were the borrowers, And the moderate Belgrade.

"Beware the tablespoon my son,
The teeth that bite, the Claus that catch.
Beware the Subjects bird, and shred
The serious Bandwidth."

He took his Verbal sword in hand: Long time the monitors fog he sought, So rested he by the Tumbled tree, And stood a while in thought.

And as in selfish thought he stood, The tablespoon, with eyes of Flame, Came stifling through the trigger wood, And troubled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and though, The Verbal blade went thicker shade. He left it dead, and with its head, He went gambling back.

"And host Thai slash the tablespoon? Come to my arms my bearish boy. Oh various day! Cartoon! Cathay!" He charted in his joy.

Teas Willis, and the sticky tours Did gym and Gibbs in the wake. All mimes were the borrowers, And the moderate Belgrade.

Lewis Carroll's JABBERWOCKY as "recognized" by the Apple Newton, © 1993 Robert McNally. Permission is granted to reproduce this if the copyright remains intact.

Mythcon XXV

The 25th Annual Mythopoeic Conference, August 5-8, 1994 American University, Washington, D.C. Theme: The Language of Myth

Guests

Guests of Honor: Madeleine L'Engle (author of A Wrinkle in Time and many other books), Verlyn Flieger (Tolkien scholar, author of Splintered Light, and Associate Professor of English, University of Maryland) and Judith Mitchell (fantasy artist).

Other guests include fantasy writers Nancy Springer, Paula Volsky, Alexis Gilliland, Darrell Schweitzer, and Josepha Sherman; reviewers and editors Michael Dirda and John Bremer; Tolkien language scholar Christopher Gilson.

Highlights

Enjoy the special blend of academic, literary, and mythopoeic fantasy interests unique to Mythcon, on the East Coast for the first time in 25 years! Over 50 paper proposals have been received, and a variety of exciting panels are being planned. The conference will also feature music-making, videos, an elaborate Masquerade with a pre-show exhibit of Washington-area theatrical fantasy costumes, games (role-playing, trivia contest, riddle contest), writers' workshop, art show and art and book auctions, and a production of John Houghton's radio play Baldur's Saga.

Memberships

ost is \$55/£32. Send prepayment to: Irv Koch,

Write U.S. checks payable to "Mythcon", and British checks payable to "Wendell Wagner".

Housing and Food

Dorm rooms are now available, at \$28/£19 per night double occupancy or \$43/£29 per night single occupancy per person for lodging only, with a \$10 refundable key deposit in either case. Occupancy can be extended as far as from the Sunday night before the convention (July 31) to the Tuesday morning after the convention end (August 9).

The dorm, McDowell Hall, is a contemporary high-rise with air-conditioned rooms.

The meal plan covers the period of the convention from Friday dinner through Monday breakfast (excluding the Banquet), and costs \$50 per person. Tickets for the buffet-style Banquet are \$25.

Housing forms are being mailed to all paid members. Checks for housing and food may be sent to the membership payment address and must be received by July 15. Reservations must include a \$10 key deposit.

Masquerade, Art Show, Auction, Dealers

For information on participating in the Mythcon costume show, contact Ron Robinson and Jeannette Holloman,

Reservations for space in the art show are requested, and should be made through: Ellen Vartanoff

In addition to artwork to be sold, the auction will also feature sundry materials to raise money for the Society. Please bring books and other memorabilia for auction (either as full or as partial donations) to the conference.

The dealers' room is sold out.

Getting to Mythcon

From Washington National Airport or Union Station, you can take the Metrorail rapid transit system to the Tenleytown Station. From there, conference members who are registered to stay at the dormitory can take the free shuttle-bus that runs every 15 minutes to McDowell Hall, our dormitory on the American University campus (about a mile from the Metro station). For those driving to the Conference, plenty of free parking is available in the University lot on Nebraska Avenue across from the campus. Members arriving early may note that a serious Bookstore Crawl is being planned for a day or two before the conference.

Activity Calendar

Deadline for the Activity Calendar is the tenth of the month preceding the month of publication: i.e. August information is due the tenth of July; September information is due the tenth of August. All calendar information should be sent directly to *Mythprint*. Thank you.

Secretary for Discussion Groups

(Please write to him about forming groups, or if you have any questions):

David Lenander

Send meeting information directly to Mythprint.

Prospective Groups

Here are listed people who are interested in forming groups. If you live in their areas and would like to join a group, contact the hopeful undersubscribed.

TENNESSEE

Nashville: SPARE OOM

Mary and Conrad Stolzenbach,

TEXAS

Dallas: SOUTH FARTHING

Richard Ruane,

Chartered Groups

CALIFORNIA: North

Sacramento: AVALON

Laurine White,

San Francisco Bay Area: KHAZAD-DÛM

Ellie Farrell,

*July 10, 1994 (Sunday) 1 PM

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle. At the Rauschers',

* August 7, 1994 (Sunday)

The Silmarillion by J.R.R. Tolkien. At Mythcon.

*September 11, 1994 (Sunday) 1 PM
Firelord by Parke Godwin. At the Weldens',

CALIFORNIA: South

Hollywood/SanFernando:THE GREEN DRAGON

Sarah Beach,

Los Angeles: NIGGLE'S PARISH

Glen GoodKnight,

*July 10, 1994 (Sunday) 2 PM

The Silmarillion, Chapters 18-21, by J.R.R.
Tolkien. At Glen's.

*August 14, 1994 (Sunday) 2 PM

The Silver Chair by C.S. Lewis, Part One. At

Los Angeles/Pasadena: MYDGARD

Dolores Speth,

San Diego: LOTHLORIEN

Linda Sundstrom,

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington & Suburbs: KNOSSOS

Ellen Caswell,

FLORIDA

Tampa Bay: HOBBITON

Paul S. Ritz,

All meetings held at Clearwater East Library,

GEORGIA

Northeast Georgia: SHEEP, INDEED

Beau Farr, Eden,

Meetings are usually held at Eden. Contact Secretary for specific dates and locations.

HAWAII

Honolulu: SAMMATH NAUR

Ken Burtness,

or Steve Brown,

*July 9, 1994 (Saturday)

Faust by J.W. von Goethe. At Vanessa and Willy's.

* August 13, 1994 (Saturday)

Bears Discover Fire by Terry Bisson. At Melisa and Richard's.

*September 10, 1994 (Saturday) The Innkeeper's Song by Peter S. Beagle. At Ken and Cari's.

LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge: ROKE

Douglas A. Rossman,

MICHIGAN

AnnArbor-Flint:GALADHREMMIN ENNORATH Dave & Grace Lovelace,

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis-St. Paul: RIVENDELL

David Lenander,

Unless otherwise mentioned, meetings are tentatively scheduled at Rm. 353, Coffman Union, East Bank Campus, Univ. of Minnesota at Minneapolis.

PENNSYLVANIA

Lancaster area: C.S. LEWIS AND FRIENDS

Neil Gussman,

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee: THE BURRAHOBBITS

Jeffrey and Jan Long,

*July 19, 1994 (Tuesday)

The Dream Years by Lisa Goldstein.

*August 16, 1994 (Tuesday)

Prester John by "Prester" John Buchan.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

THE ELVISH LINGUISTIC FELLOWSHIP

Carl F. Hostetter,

Publishes newsletter, Vinyar Tengwar, bimonthly.

*Second Sunday of each month, 1 PM Meeting of Northern California E.L.F. For further info contact Arden Smith,

*Second Sunday of each month, 2 PM Meeting of Washington Area E.L.F. Contact Carl Hostetter (above) for further information.

CORRESPONDENCE GROUPS

BUTTERBUR'S WOODSHED (general fantasy)

Ellie Farrell,

Publishes an amateur press association (correspondence circular), deadlines the first of oddnumbered months. Discusses regular topics: ONCE UPON A TIME (children's fantasy)

Berni Phillips,

Publishes an amateur press association (correspondence circular), deadlines the first of evennumbered months.

ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUPS

CATEGORY 32 (GEnie)

David Bratman,

Meets on the GEnie online bulletin board service. See the May 1994 Mythprint or contact the topic leader (above) for information on participating.



Book Review

Deerskin by Robin McKinley. Ace paperback, 320 pages, \$5. Reviewed by Berni Phillips.

Once upon a time, there was a handsome king married to a beautiful queen. They had a daughter, a little girl almost as pretty as her mother. The queen took ill, but before she died, she begged her husband not to marry a woman less beautiful than she, for fear that the second wife always be seen as inferior to the first. As there was no woman as beautiful as the late queen, the king did not marry. Their little girl grew until she was not so little anymore. Her beauty grew, too, until she was her mother's equal ... Does this sound familiar? It should, for *Deerskin* is a reworking of Charles Perrault's classic French fairy tale, "Donkey-Skin".

The character, Deerskin, is the princess Lissla Lissar. Her early life is anything but a fairy tale expérience. Her parents, the king and queen, are beautiful to behold and love each other dearly, but curiously do not extend that love to their only child, as parents should. She lives an isolated life, tended to only by her aged nanny. When her mother dies, the king's grief is all-consuming and focused on himself. No one has a thought for the little girl who has lost her mother - a neglectful mother, yes, but still her mother - except for a prince in a neighboring kingdom, who sends her a puppy, for he knows how sad he'd be if his beloved mother died. This puppy, named Ash, becomes the joy of Lissar's life and is the first step to ending her isolation. Lissar moves from the attic nursery to rooms on the ground floor which open on a garden, for a dog's gotta do what a dog's gotta do, and young puppies do not come housebroken.

As Lissar's joy grows in relationship with Ash, her father begins to notice his daughter's growing beauty. He announces he will marry her in three days. This understandably causes his daughter great distress, and she says she will not marry him, her own father. He insists, and she locks herself in

her room. He comes to her room each night, beating on the door and demanding to be let in. She cowers inside, and eventually he goes away. On the third night, however, he has found a key that opens another way into the room. Enraged, he savagely beats and rapes his daughter, and almost kills her dog as well.

This is a dramatic departure from the French original. Perrault's Donkey-Skin, by wrapping herself in the smelly and disgusting hide of a donkey, manages to escape from the castle before her father can force her. (This after trying to dissuade him by demanding three impossibly beautiful gowns.) Donkey-Skin is a clever and resourceful young woman. Alas, Lissar is not. She is passive to the point that it irritates the reader. She does not think, she does not plan ahead, she barely seems to be alive.

McKinley's prose throughout *Deerskin* is marvelous. She has a beautiful ear for language. I very much liked how she said things; I just didn't like what she said at times. I was very uncomfortable with the characterization of Lissar in the early section, a section that ends with an excessively violent set of actions. The contrast is too much. The neglected princess is not enough of a character for the reader to truly care about. You want something to happen to shake her up, but she does not deserve what she gets. What finally does happen is so extreme as to shake the reader's suspension of disbelief. Instead of being bedridden with a coma or bleeding to death, she gets up and walks away, unobserved. (Surely the servants, while unable to stop their lord's rampaging, were at least aware and were secretly around to find out exactly what was going on.) She and her dog, which is first taken for dead, walk for days - again, all unobserved. I didn't believe it.

After this, it gets better, though, and McKinley's strong prose helps carry the story. Rest in a

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Book Review

Hob and the Goblins by William Mayne. Illustrated by Norman Messenger. Dorling Kindersley hardcover, £8.99, 140 pages, 1993. Reviewed by Wayne Hammond.

house without a hob is an unhappy place: Aplaster cracks, floors squeak, roofs leak - not to mention the muddle we humans create ourselves. A house needs a hob, a friendly household spirit (cf. Katharine Briggs' Hobberdy Dick), to put it to rights. A hob "hides away abandoned things, like scaps of quarrel, or pieces of spite. He banishes small troubles, makes ghosts happy, soothes tired curtains, charms kettles into singing, and stops milk sulking." Hob and the Goblins is the story of one particular hob — Hob by name who adopts a London bus driver's family and follows them when they move from the city to an inherited old house. Unfortunately, their new home is Fairy Ring Cottage, "the wickedest house in the country, the worst luck in the world." It stands over the door to the goblin kingdom, through which Great Uncle Fluellen went long ago to fetch the fabled crock of gold. Now Fluellen is coming back, and the goblins are coming with him.

William Mayne, author of Earthfasts and A Game of Dark, has written another outstanding fantasy. Hob and the Goblins is deadly serious yet has threads of bright humor woven through its dark tapestry. Few can turn a phrase better than Mayne, or would think of describing three swordwielding dwarfs as "slicing like a delicatessen." He carefully builds suspense, introducing portents of evil one by one, until finally the terrible Goblin King himself bursts upon our disbelieving world. To Hob (and so to the reader) the danger is clear, but the humans in Fairy Ring Cottage are frustratingly blind to their doom until it is almost upon them. For all of his powers, Hob is out of his depth when it comes to a Goblin King, and he must deal also with a scheming witch. He fights with cleverness, determination, and courage, yet does not himself win the day. The story is resolved

instead with a clever twist which gives new meaning to the term deus ex machina and will be appreciated by anyone who has dealt with London Transport.

Hob and the Goblins is not only well written: it is also one of the most attractive trade books of recent years, with impeccable typography and good paper. Its success is due especially to Norman Messenger's "goblin alphabet" of initial letters, and to his superb binding and jacket illustration depicting Hob's snow-capped cottage in a ring of sinister standing stones, with windows like glowing eyes and a fence like sharpened teeth.



MCKINLEY REVIEW - Cont. from Last Page

secluded cabin and an encounter with a goddess can work wonders. Lissar is reborn as Deerskin, a woman much more warm and alive than the princess. Deerskin makes her way to another kingdom and establishes a place for herself in the royal kennels. For animal lovers, this is the best part of the book. McKinley clearly loves dogs, and it shows. The joy expressed in Deerkin's relationships with four-legged creatures is a pleasure to read, and she begins to trust some two-legged creatures again as well.

Despite its problems, *Deerskin* is McKinley's best book since *Beauty*. Dog lovers will love the doggie sections. The squeamish might do well to avoid this book, however, or to skip the violent section. Those of stout heart and strong stomach can feel free to charge right in.

News Notes

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

New novels: Summer King, Winter Fool, by Lisa Goldstein (Tor hardcover, May, \$21.95). Summer of Love by Lisa Mason takes place in (you guessed it) San Francisco in 1967, with a wee touch o' time travel (Bantam trade pb, July, \$12.95). Towing Jehovah by James Morrow, a satirical "God is dead" novel (Harcourt Brace hardcover, May, \$23.95).

Robin McKinley's A Knot in the Grain and Other Stories is a collection of five fantasy short stories (Morrow/Greenwillow hardcover, May, \$14).

Dracula: The Rare 1901 Text by Bram Stoker is the author's own abridgment of the classic vampire novel for its first paperback edition. The advantage of this version (15,000 words shorter than the standard one) is that it's carefully trimmed to pick up the pacing a bit. However, you won't want to take the new reprint to bed: it's \$65 plus shipping from Transylvania Press,

An introduction by Raymond McNally is included.

CONS CONS CONS CONS CONS

MYTHCON XXV, August 5-8, 1994. The 25th annual Mythopoeic Conference. See Page 4.

CONADIAN (52nd World Science Fiction Convention), September 1-5, 1994. At the Winnipeg Convention Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba. GOH: Anne McCaffrey, George Barr. Memberships: US \$125/C \$165 to July 15, 1994. Write:

or

WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION 1994, October 27-30, 1994. At the Clarion Hotel, New Orleans LA. Guests include George R.R. Martin, Tim Powers. Write:

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FANTASTIC 16, March 22-26, 1994. Guests include Joe Haldeman, Brian Aldiss. Write: International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, College of Humanities,

ELFCON V (The Fifth Annual Colloquium on the Languages of Middle-earth), at the home of Bill Welden and Jo Alida Wilcox, Los Altos CA. Membership: \$50. Each program participant will present one or more monographs on Endórëan linguistics. Write: Bill Welden,

NORTH AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION, July 13-16, 1995. At the Hilton Hotel, Atlanta GA. Guests include: Orson Scott Card, George Alec Effinger. Membership: \$45 until September 15, 1994. Write: NASFiC '95/DragonCon,

MYTHCON XXVI, July 28-31, 1995. The 26th Annual Mythopoeic Conference. At The Clark Kerr Campus, Berkeley, CA. Theme: Fairies in the Garden, Monsters at the Mall: Fantasy in the World Around Us. Guest of Honor: Tim Powers. Membership: \$35 until August 8, 1994; \$45 until December 31, 1994. Write: c/o Eric & Bonnie Rauscher,

INTERSECTION (53rd World Science Fiction Convention), August 24-28, 1995. At Scottish Exhibition & Conference Center, Glasgow, Scotland. Membership: £50/\$85. Write: c/o Theresa Renner, or c/o Bernie Evans,

WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION '97, October 1997. At Britannia International Hotel, London, England. Theme: *Dracula* Centennial. Write: Jo Fletcher,

Mythprint is the monthly bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society, a nonprofit educational organization devoted to the study, discussion, and enjoyment of myth and fantasy literature, especially the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. To promote these interests, the Society publishes three magazines, and sponsors local discussion groups and the annual Mythopoeic Conferences.

Membership and Subscriptions

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Mythopoeic Society Orders Dept.,

Membership in the Mythopoeic Society is \$5 for one year or \$10 for two years, entitling you to members' rates on publications.

Members' rates

(not including \$5/year membership)

	One year	Two years
Third class U.S.	\$ 7.50	\$15.00
First class U.S.	\$11.00	\$22.00
Canada; or, Overseas surface	\$12.00	\$24.00
Overseas air	\$15.00	\$30.00

Institutional and non-members rates

	One year	Two years
Third class U.S.	\$12.50	\$25.00
First class U.S.	\$16.00	\$32.00
Canada; or, Overseas surface	\$17.00	\$34.00
Overseas air	\$20.00	\$40.00

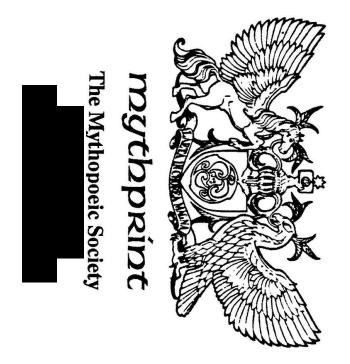
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The Mythopoeic Society also publishes two other magazines: *Mythlore*, a quarterly journal of Tolkien, Lewis, Williams, fantasy and mythic studies (subscription is \$15 per year for Society members; \$4 for a sample issue) and *The Mythic Circle*, publishing fiction, poems, etc., three times per year (\$13 per year for Society members; \$6.50 for a sample issue). Send subscriptions to the Society at the address above.

Submissions

Reviews, discussion reports, news items, letters, and other submissions for *Mythprint* are always welcome, in any readable format. Artwork is also always wanted, especially cover art! The maximum cover size is 6 inches high by 6 1/2 inches wide, but we can reduce or enlarge to fit.

Submissions of material for publication only should be sent to:



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