

MYTHPRINT

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See inside back cover

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DEADLINES for receiving material for each issue of *Mythprint* are the
1st of the preceding month (eg, August 1st for the September issue).

Mythcon XXIX

Scholar Guest of Honor: Verlyn Flieger

by David Bratman

Verlyn Flieger is the "Special Barfield Guest" of the C.S. Lewis Centenary conference being held at Wheaton College this month. Owen Barfield was the same age as his friend C.S. Lewis, so we are celebrating the centenary of both men's births. Barfield is sometimes called "the philosopher of the Inklings," and is known mostly for his non-fiction. Critical response to his work therefore often proceeds on a different level than it does for those Inklings known for their novels. Complex as Barfield's linguistic and metaphysical theories are, what they need is not so much *explication* as *application*. Among the Inklings, J.R.R. Tolkien is probably the writer to whom Barfield's theories are most broadly applicable. And Verlyn Flieger is the scholar who has made this applicability her specialty.

Flieger's principal application of Barfield to Tolkien comes in her 1983 book *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*. Here she shows how Barfield's theory of semantic unities, as outlined in *Poetic Diction*, helped Tolkien develop his ideas of the connection between language and mythology. Her discussions of Tolkien's creation myth, Elvish naming practices, and development of light and darkness as organizing principles are all the more effective for arguing that Tolkien used Barfield's ideas deliberately. *Splintered Light* is also particularly notable as the first book about Tolkien to focus on his life-work, *The Silmarillion*.

Barfield is hardly mentioned in Flieger's 1997 second book on Tolkien, *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie*. But his presence can be discerned there. *A Question of Time* is best read in conjunction with a Barfield book like *Saving the Appearances*, for the main argument of both works is that reality is more complex, subtle, interconnected, and unstable than our surface perceptions of it. What Barfield applies to the primary world, Flieger shows Tolkien using in his sub-creation. *A Question of Time*

discusses Tolkien's use of time travel and dreams (and dreams as time travel) in *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Notion Club Papers*, *Smith of Wootton Major*, and other works. For Tolkien's characters, time travel is not a matter of stepping into a machine, but a change of perception of the complex reality surrounding them: a very Barfieldian concept.

Of Verlyn Flieger's many other articles on Tolkien, the most important ones unconnected to her two books are probably "Frodo and Aragorn: The Concept of the Hero" in *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives* (ed. Neil D. Isaacs & Rose A. Zimbardo, 1981) and "The Green Man, The Green Knight, and Treebeard: Scholarship and Invention in Tolkien's Fiction" in *Scholarship & Fantasy: Proceedings of The Tolkien Phenomenon* (ed. K.J. Battarbee, 1993). She has written on the other Inklings in similar terms to her Tolkien work, publishing articles on language in Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet* ("The Sound of Silence," in *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*, ed. Peter J. Schakel and Charles A. Huttar, 1991) and on time travel in Williams's *Many Dimensions* ("Time in the Stone of Suleiman," in *The Rhetoric of Vision*, same editors, 1996). She has also written on E.R. Eddison, given conference papers on Barfield's work, and penned the tribute to Barfield which appeared in the February 1998 issue of *Mythprint*.

Verlyn Flieger has taught in the English Department of the University of Maryland for many years, and was recently promoted to full Professor there. Her writing is not flashy, but repays close and careful study, as it is always learned and insightful. Her books do not develop a single massive thesis and lay it out from beginning to end. Instead, she takes a basic concept—light or time—and explores the applications Tolkien gave it, looking at it from various angles and in various specific works. As a scholar of Barfield and his philosophical importance to the Inklings, she is a most appropriate Special Guest.

The High History of the Not-Ready Players

by Eleanor M. Farrell

Bemused Mythcon attendees, during the past decade, have been subjected to an odd bit of evening programming titled "The Not-Ready-for-Mythcon Players," which, to the uninitiated, looks like a bunch of crazed Mythies running around on a stage, waving sheets. In fact, this piece of tradition can be blamed on Ursula K. Le Guin... but I should start at the beginning.

The 1987 Mythopoeic Conference at Marquette University in Milwaukee was honored to have not only Christopher Tolkien but also John Bellairs as Guests of Honor. A fantasist whose delightful wit is mostly known from a series of young adult novels, Bellairs had also written a couple of bizarrely hilarious but hard-to-find pieces, such as *St. Fidgeta and Other Parodies* and *The Pedant and the Shuffly*. Debby Jones and I decided to stage a condensed version of the latter as a masquerade entry. In this tale, an unpleasant wizard (the Pedant) changes people he doesn't like into creatures called "Flimsies"—which look like dinner napkins soiled with gravy and cranberry sauce. Not having such condiments available in the Marquette cafeteria, we covered Eric Rauscher and Sherwood Smith with sheets coated with chocolate sauce and cherry jam, and put on our little play. Bellairs professed himself charmed.

These sheets did not survive, but the idea did, and I was struck one day with the appropriateness of re-enacting the "Fall of the Tombs of Atuan" for Ursula Le Guin's presence at the '88 Mythcon in Berkeley. Sheets were obtained and dyed, and eight volunteers assembled to impersonate the other tombs. Le Guin was, according to witnesses, convulsed with laughter, and when David Bratman presented her with the script (written on a napkin during the banquet), she told him that we should do this every year. We have.

Subsequent Not-Ready productions have covered various works by Mythcon guests of honor,

and/or general conference themes. Some of the playlets have been forgettable, and are best forgotten. Others have presented unique opportunities of perfect casting, such as David Bratman as Mr. Peabody and Pat Wynne as his boy Sherman, manning the Wayback Machine to visit the Romantic poets. We were challenged by Guy Gavriel Kay to incorporate the most famous typo in his Fionavar trilogy ("an army of five hunched men") into a play, and did so as part of "Sam Spadgee and the Case of the Missing Mythcon."

Tolkien's works have been a fertile ground for inspiration. One of our troupe's highlights was a Monty Python-esque performance of "Famous Battles of Middle-earth" during the 1992 Tolkien Centenary at Oxford, where we enlisted Keble's sheets to augment imported posters of Bogart and Dean (for "Battle -under-Stars") and Bic lighters ("Battle of Sudden Flame"). For the Boulder Mythcon a few years ago, we put on "The Return of the Shadow... Puppets" as a Balinese *wayang* performance. Last year we presented previews of a completely Tolkien-inspired television series line-up, including "I Love Luthien", "Melkor Place", "Last Little Homely House on the Prairie", "Gilgalad's Island", "Istari 5-0" and "Beowatch." I was delighted to be able to enlist the help of two members of the Elvish Linguistic Fellowship, Carl Hostetter and Arden Smith, who composed an alliterative description of the surfer Geat drama.

This year, in celebration of the Lewis Centenary, we will tackle the works of C.S. Lewis for the first time, with our eleventh annual production. As creator, director, writer, producer, costume and set designer, music coordinator, dialect coach, and actor, I cheerfully take full blame for the Not-Ready Players; but I would like to share whatever credit we may have earned from generous Mythcon audiences with the stalwart group of Society members who are willing to make fools of themselves in front of both friends and complete strangers. We hope you will enjoy this year's performance.

1998 Mythopoeic Award Finalists

Fantasy Award, Adult Literature:

Peter S. Beagle, *Giant Bones*
A.S. Byatt, *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*
Charles de Lint, *Trader*
Neil Gaiman, *Neverwhere*
Patrick O'Leary, *The Gift*

Fantasy Award, Children's Literature

Susan Cooper, *The Boggart and the Monster*
Dahlov Ipcar, *A Dark Horn Blowing*
Robin McKinley, *Rose Daughter*
Jane Yolen, Young Merlin trilogy, consisting of:
Passager, Hobby and Merlin


Scholarship Award, Inklings Studies

Verlyn Flieger, *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's
Road to Faërie*
Janine Goffar, *C.S. Lewis Index: Rumours from the
Sculptor's Shop*
Walter Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: A Companion & Guide*
Brian Horne, ed., *Charles Williams: A Celebration*
Kathryn Lindskoog, *Finding the Landlord: A Guidebook
to C.S. Lewis's The Pilgrim's Regress*

Scholarship Award, Myth and Fantasy Studies

Glen Cavaliero, *The Supernatural and English Fiction*
John Clute and John Grant, eds., *The Encyclopedia of
Fantasy*
S.T. Joshi, Lord Dunsany, *Master of the Anglo-Irish
Imagination*
Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of
Imagination*

The 1998 Mythopoeic Awards will be presented during the Saturday evening banquet on July 18th at Mythcon XXIX. A complete list of past awards can be found on the Society's web site at:



Letters

*from Christina Scull and Wayne Hammond
Williamstown, MA*

We finished reading the May annual report issue [*Mythprint* 35:5] with great concern for the Mythopoeic Society. We fear that unless the Society is quickly put back on an even keel it may sink, which would be a sad loss. Of course we appreciate that Stewards are volunteers and work for the Society in their spare time, which unexpected personal problems can make scarce; but if changing circumstances make it difficult for a Steward to find time for Society duties, then it would be better at least not to stand for re-election.

We agree with Lynn Maudlin's letter. A regular bulletin, sent to all members, is essential for good communication, which is at the heart of any successful society. *Mythprint* should be a universal benefit of membership. However, if membership is to be linked with a subscription, as now proposed by the Stewards, this should not be done until all of the Society's publications have been restored to regular frequencies, and then it should be explicitly guaranteed that membership will be extended if all of the advertised issues of the chosen publication are not published in the course of the year. It seems to us that a better simplification would be to have one rate for all members, but include in this both the Society's bulletin, which needs to reach all members, and its journal, to which most members already subscribe.

With regard to the Treasurer's and Orders Department reports, would it not be prudent, since the Society is faced with a substantial deficit for 1998, to more widely circulate among members (not only at Mythcon) a request for free storage space before renting an office? \$5,000 is a generous donation but would not last long toward rent, insurance, etc., and Lisa Harrigan's financial report shows that the Society is in no position to bear such costs on a

continuing basis. In the accounts, "office rent" for 1998 is assumed to be the full amount of the donation; unless similar donations are received in future years, it hardly seems wise to spend any amount for this purpose against an Orders Department whose 1998 projected return, minus projected expenses, is zero.

It is not Lee Speth's fault that his circumstances have changed; however, the needs of the Orders Department have remained the same, and its Manager should be expected to meet them. The description of this position, with regard to the 1999 elections, should include access to sufficient storage space as a prerequisite. For every Steward's office, in fact, it would be a good idea to indicate the sort of equipment or space needed to carry out the designated tasks. It should also be noted pointedly that Stewards need not live in California in order to successfully fulfill their duties. This is an unfortunate impression that many members have had for years, since the Society was begun in California, but need not apply in these days of e-mail and faxes. The present Chair of the Council of Stewards of course lives in the Midwest.

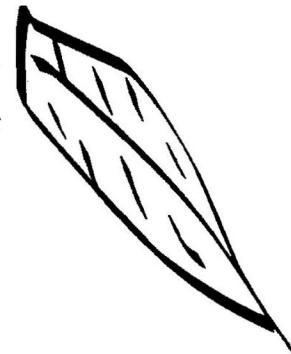
In the accounts it is stated that the cost of *Mythlore* in 1997 was \$2,609.62. Presumably this was for the issue actually posted at the very end of 1996; we received no issues at all in 1997. Yet only \$5,575.00 is estimated as the *Mythlore* expense for 1998, which would seem to cover barely more than two issues, not the promised four, and printing costs have been going up. We are told that the next publication of the Mythopoeic Press will appear for Mythcon, and \$1,780 is allowed for its costs, but apparently no copies are expected to be sold, since no projected income is shown in the 1998 budget, and the figures for this do not seem to have been included with those projected for the Orders Department, since those show no significant change from 1997.

The accounts clearly show that adjustments to subscription (or membership) rates need to be made, as has been done with *Mythprint*, so that no publication is subsidized by others. For example, income from *Mythic Circle* for 1998 is estimated at \$130, but its expense at \$1,500. In these circumstances it might be better not to produce two issues, or to produce two smaller issues or a cheaper double issue. Presumably there was only one issue in 1997, which cost \$600. This seems a high price to pay for a magazine with a subscriber base of only 36, or only seven percent of the total Society membership. Of course one of the reasons the Society is having such costing problems is that some publications have appeared so irregularly that subscriptions which were based on costs calculated years ago are having to cover current increased costs.

In retrospect it would also have been sensible to count the 1992 Tolkien Centenary Conference *Proceedings* as at least two issues of *Mythlore* since it was quite an expensive item. We doubt that anybody would have objected; it is quite common for societies to produce double issues.

Perhaps the Council of Stewards should consider establishing a back-up editorial group willing to rescue any publication whose editor is having temporary problems such as illness or a family crisis. The editor could then contact the group and send all his material to them, and they would do the best they could. We are sure that members would rather get publications on time, and in the circumstances would overlook any rough edges.

We are very grateful to Joan Marie Verba for the information she gave in her note on the Mythopoeic Society Officer Elections, which has answered some of the questions we asked in a letter printed in *Mythprint* in May 1997. Surely this information should be sent out every three years



in good time for the elections? We received no notice of the 1996 elections until the ballot paper arrived. In fact we are not sure if either of us has ever received a copy of the Society By-Laws. These were summarized in *Mythlore* 23, and amendments have appeared in later *Mythlores*. Surely a copy of the By-Laws should be provided to all members on joining? In *Mythlore* 23, March 1980, it was possible to obtain a full set of the By-Laws from the Recording Secretary. Is this still the case? Since standing for election depends upon a nomination with signatures from at least five percent of the members, surely the number of members should be included each year in the Membership Secretary's report, which might also include the number of new members or subscribers, and the number of those who failed to renew. This would give everyone a much better idea of the present health of the Society.

*from John Rateliff
Renton, WA*

[Re Annual Report, May 1998 *Mythprint*]. I rather wish Glen had "repeat[ed] what was said in [the] Editorial of the last issue of *Mythlore*" since we didn't get the latest issue, nor the issue before that. Another issue is promised before July, but I see no reason to think we'll get that one either, despite being fully paid up on our subscription all this time. I'm puzzled, looking at the Treasurer's Report, how a magazine that appears so rarely (once every fifteen months or so) can be so expensive for the Society. I also find the facts and figures between different parts of the issue don't entirely jib. For example, on page 13 the "Society Statistics" claims 487 members for the Society, with 433 subscribers to *Mythlore* and 158 to *Mythprint*. Yet the Treasurer's report on page 4 shows income from dues for 1997 was what we'd expect if there were 207 members, and the projection for '98 is fixed at the rate of 160 members. Are we to assume that two-thirds of all

members sent in dues for multiple years, skewing the figures? Or is the Society's membership really about the same as the subscription for *Mythprint*—i.e., between 120 and 160 people? It makes a great deal of difference: the Election section states that anyone wishing to run for office must have 22 fellow members sign a nomination petition. If the Society really does have well over 400 active members that's not so bad, but if that's 20% of the whole pool it's a prohibitively high bar. Are current officers required to fulfill this requirement, or only potential new ones? Who collects the ballots and tallies the results?

Re. the membership fee: I say abolish it. The Mythopoeic Society is the only group of its kind that I know of where you get nothing in return for joining, since the subscriptions are all an additional cost. The Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts, the MLA, the Tolkien Society, the RPGA, and every other special interest group I can think of that publishes its own newsletter and/or journal includes that newsletter and journal as part of the benefits of joining. This was exactly what the Society did for many, many years. It was a good policy. Changing it was a mistake. We should reinstate it on the original basis: subscribing to any Society publication automatically makes you a member of the Society, with full voting privileges. That's simple, fair, and in line with what every other comparable group offers its members. The Mythopoeic Society should do no less.

*from Grace E. Funk
Lumby, BC*

I may say that I entirely agree with Lynn Maudlin [*Mythprint* 35:5, May 1998] that a newsletter should be part of membership fees. With regard to the membership fee structure proposed on page 13, I say, let the membership fee include *Mythprint*, and then let the other periodicals be by separate, optional subscription.

Activity Calendar

Contact the Discussion Group Secretary:
David Lenander

The Bird & Baby Web Page:

Prospective Groups

CONNECTICUT

Southington (Central CT)

Bill Pierce, E-mail:

FLORIDA

North Central Florida: ERYN GALEN

B.L. McCauley,

GEORGIA

Atlanta area: CENTRAL ATLANTIS

Irv Koch, c/o The SF & Mystery Book Shop Ltd.,

Hoschton: SHEEP, INDEED

Beau Farr, Eden,

ILLINOIS

Peoria: THE FAR WESTFARTHING SMIAL

Mike Foster,

MICHIGAN

Julie Bailey,

MISSOURI

St. Louis: THE KHAZAD

S. Gary & Sylvia Hunnewell,

OHIO

Akron

David Staley,

Cincinnati

Diane Joy Baker,

Dayton-Kettering: THE PRANCING PONY

Eileen Ribner,

PENNSYLVANIA

Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area (NE PA)

Glenn Sadler, English Dept., Bloomsburg Univ.,
Bloomsburg, PA 17815.

Pittsburgh area

Will Vaus, Murrys ville Comm. Church,

TENNESSEE

Nashville: SPARE OOM

Mary & Conrad Stolzenbach,

TEXAS

Dallas: SOUTH FARTHING

Richard Ruane,

Chartered Groups

CALIFORNIA

Greater Los Angeles: NIGGLE'S PARISH

Glen GoodKnight,

Los Angeles/Pasadena: MYDGARD

Lee Speth,

July 26: *The Castle* by Franz Kafka

Aug 16: *Pincher Martin/The Inheritors* by William Golding

San Francisco Bay Area: KHAZAD-DOM

Edith Crowe & Amy Wisniewski,

July 19: Mythcon Book Toss

COLORADO

Denver area: FANUIDHOL ("CLOUDY HEAD")

Patricia Yarrow,

August: *A Gathering of Heroes* by Paul Edwin Zimmer

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington & Suburbs: KNOSSOS

Mimi Stevens, [REDACTED]

July 17: *Original Sin* by P.D. James
August 21: *Talking God* by Tony Hillerman

FLORIDA

Tampa Bay: HOBBITON

Paul S. Ritz, [REDACTED]

HAWAII

Oahu: SAMMATH NAUR

Steve Brown, [REDACTED]

LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge: ROKE

Douglas A. Rossman, [REDACTED]

MICHIGAN

Ann Arbor-Flint: GALADHREMMIN-ENNORATH

Dave & Grace Lovelace, [REDACTED]

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis-St. Paul: RIVENDELL

David Lenander (See address above)

NEVADA

Reno: CRICKHOLLOW

Joanne Burnett-Bowen, [REDACTED]

NORTH CAROLINA

Charlotte: THE N. CAROLINA TOLKIEN SOCIETY

Matt & Renita Peeler [REDACTED]

PENNSYLVANIA

Lancaster Area: C.S. LEWIS AND FRIENDS

Neil Gussman, [REDACTED]

SOUTH CAROLINA

Columbia: THE COLUMBIA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY

Louise Grooms, [REDACTED]

WASHINGTON

Seattle: MITHLOND

Lenore Jackson, [REDACTED]

July 12: Tom Bombadil

August 9: Gollum

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee: THE BURRAHOBBITS

Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]

July 21: *Brittle Innings* by Michael Bishop

Aug. 18: *The Lions of Al-Rassan* by Guy Gavriel Kay

Special Interest Group

THE ELVISH LINGUISTIC FELLOWSHIP

Carl Hostetter, [REDACTED]

Publishes newsletter, *Vinyar Tengwar* ("News Letters")

The ELF also publishes *Parma Eldalamberon* ("The Book of Elven-tongues"). Christopher Gilson, [REDACTED]

Correspondence Groups

BUTTERBUR'S WOODSHED (general fantasy)

Eleanor Farrell, [REDACTED]

Correspondence circular with set topic. Info: [REDACTED]

Sept.: *War in Heaven! The Greater Trumps* by Charles Williams

ONCE UPON A TIME (children's fantasy)

Laura Krentz, [REDACTED]

Correspondence circular. Info: [REDACTED]

Online Discussion Group

COINHERENCE

Online discussion of Charles Williams

Contact David Davis: E-mail [REDACTED]

Currently discussing *Shadows of Ecstasy*

Book Reviews

VONDA N. MCINTYRE, *The Moon and the Sun*. New York: Pocket Books, 1997. ISBN 0-671-56765-9, \$23.00 (hardback). Reviewed by Alexei Kondratiev.

In the early days of deep-sea navigation, sailors often spoke of seeing sea-monsters and merfolk of various kinds. As late as 1741, George Steller, the naturalist on Vitus Bering's expedition to the North Pacific and a man not known for superstitious fantasies, casually reported an encounter with the "Danish sea ape" as though it were nothing out of the ordinary. What, in fact, were these mariners seeing? Could there not have been, in past centuries, a unique species of sea mammal that gave rise to these stories, but which has since become extinct?

This is the premise Vonda McIntyre has chosen for her novel. She has set it in 1693, near the tail-end of the period where such sightings occurred. Louis XIV is at the height of his power, secure in his absolute rule, the uncontested leader of Europe's Catholic states. The splendour of his court in Versailles bears witness to his godlike might; but, unlike a god, he is mortal, and aging, and not in the best of health. When a sea monster is captured and brought to Versailles, a new hope is kindled in him: could not an elixir of immortality be distilled from the organs of this strange creature?

The monster's captor, Yves de la Croix, is a young Jesuit with a passion for natural science. Although his commitment to the scientific method is genuine, he remains acutely aware of his dependency on the King's patronage—and Louis cares nothing for science in itself, only for the benefits it might bring him. This means that whatever experiments Yves conducts must be, if not immediately useful, at least pleasing and entertaining enough to maintain the King's interest. Yves has as his assistant his sister Marie-Josèphe, whom he has brought to Versailles from a convent in Martinique to be a lady-in-waiting to Mademoiselle, the King's niece. Because of her colonial upbringing, Marie-Josèphe is ill-prepared

for the intrigue, lewdness, and casual cruelty she encounters at court—or for the obstacles social prejudice has placed before the development of her considerable artistic and scientific talents, simply because she is a woman. Nevertheless (but not without considerable misgivings), Yves allows her to participate in the care and study of the monster, which leads her to discover that their captive is no mere animal, but an intelligent being whose strange songs communicate messages. The creature, referred to at first as "the sea monster", gradually becomes "the sea woman", and finally is called by name. It becomes imperative to save her from the cruel fate the King has prepared for her, but is it possible to convince Louis of her "humanity"? For the King, despite his monstrous arrogance, is not an evil man: he is capable of sympathy, and even of kindness. But her status as a woman makes it difficult for Marie-Josèphe to be taken seriously—and she is opposed by her career-minded brother.

Marie-Josèphe tries to enlist the help of another fictitious character, Lucien de Barenton, count de Chrétien (an ironic name, since he is an avowed atheist), who in this alternative history is one of Louis XIV's most intimate advisors. Lucien is a dwarf, suffering constant physical pain as a result of his deformity, although this does not prevent him from being a sexual favourite with the ladies of the court. Indeed, he uses sex as a drug for his pain, but avoids the thought of emotional entanglement and marriage, not wishing to bind a woman to a life with his handicap. Marie-Josèphe's combination of fresh innocence and courage begins to melt his reserve. The development of their romance is well-drawn and affecting, and becomes closely tied to the increasingly suspenseful pacing of the plot.

McIntyre has done an enormous amount of research on the period, and her descriptions of court life at Versailles are striking and picturesque. Yet, to readers familiar with the reign of Louis XIV, there is something a little "off" about the entire representation, as though she had failed to understand

all of her materials in their proper context. There are many errors of detail (for instance, Joan of Arc is referred to as "St Jeanne", although she wouldn't be canonised until 1920!). One can, of course, ascribe this to the story being an alternative history where not all the details need be the same as in the primary world, but at times one can be led to wonder whether McIntyre would not have been wiser to set the whole thing in a completely imaginary world that was designed to reflect the basic traits of our seventeenth century (as R.A. McAvoy did in her *Lens of the World* series), rather than trying for an out-and-out historical novel.

The most troublesome and damaging aspect of the book, however, is its poorly thought-out ideological message. McIntyre has chosen to represent religion and science as completely opposed to each other, much as in Soviet-era atheist propaganda. Religion, in her presentation, is always evil, while science is always beneficial. Her characters' appeal grows in proportion to the weakness of their religious beliefs. This is one of the elements that wreaks havoc with the historical setting. While they were hardly models of tolerance or intellectual broad-mindedness, neither Mme de Maintenon nor Innocent IV were quite the malicious bigots portrayed here. And would Louis XIV, the protector of the Catholic world, really have had a publicly professed atheist as his close advisor, no matter how well-disposed he was towards the man's family? This is not to say that there is anything out of place about a thoughtful critique of the Church's historical role, even if it leads to a very negative verdict—only that in this case the anti-religious stance is so simplistic that it looks like the product of cultural prejudice rather than true reflection. This impression is reinforced by instances of the blindest kind of political correctness: for instance, we are obviously meant to feel outrage at the repression of women's rights in Christian Europe, but at the same time we are invited to show respect for the far worse oppression of women in the Muslim world, simply because it is a different culture from ours—as though anything non-Christian or non-Western were automatically superior.

This is a pity, for the book as a whole has considerable appeal, with attractive, convincing main characters and a masterfully structured plot. The People of the Sea, especially, are a wonderful creation, and one wishes they had been centre stage more often in the course of the story.

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TERRY PRATCHETT, *Maskerade*. New York: HarperPrism, 1997. ISBN 0-06-105251-5, 288 pages, \$22.00. Reviewed by Lynn Maudlin.

For years now, whenever I'm lucky enough to visit friends in England, I notice Terry Pratchett novels (*lots* of 'em) on their shelves. "Who is this guy?" I'd ask and they'd say, "Discworld. Very funny stuff. You should read it. And get your hands off my book, Maudlin!" So it was with no small degree of expectation that I began reading *Maskerade*, and I am pleased to say it did not disappoint. Pratchett isn't competing with Tolkien, but he has a lovely humorous turn of phrase.

The book opens with a violent mountain storm, described in graphic detail, then "an eldritch voice shrieked: 'When shall we...two...meet again?'" followed by a more ordinary voice asking, "What'd you go and shout that for? You made me drop my toast in the fire..." and thus we're introduced to the witches, crone Granny Weatherwax and mother Nanny Ogg, two of Discworld's repeating characters. Nanny Ogg can see the future in the foam on the top of a beer mug (it invariably shows that she'll shortly enjoy a refreshing drink without having to pay for it). Their problem, Nanny observes, is that one needs at least three witches for a coven—because two witches are just an argument.

The most likely candidate for the maiden witch role is Agnes Nitt, quite good looking in an expansive kind of way, replete with an amazing voice; a sensible girl with a lovely personality and great hair, who nonetheless wants to be called Perdita X and sing opera. She's run off to Ankh Morpork, Discworld's capital city, which launches us into the primary storyline: a *Phantom of the*

Opera spoof and very funny if you've read the novel by Gaston Leroux or had any kind of exposure to *Phantom*—and still quite funny even if you haven't.

In true *Phantom* tradition, Pratchett gives us Christine, this time with a tin ear and the happy smile of "someone who is aware that she is thin and has long blond hair." He gives us an appropriately mysterious, implausible and ridiculous Ghost who sends letters to the management which read: "Hahahaha! Ahahahaha! Yrs, The Opera Ghost P.S. Ahahahaha!!!!!" And he gives us Nanny Ogg's cat Greebo, who passes for a fur coat until he starts eating the opera patron's chocolates, and transforms into human form when alarmed.

This is not a politically correct book. For example, Pratchett makes many humorous observations based upon Agnes' size. So, if that offends, don't read the book or, better, throw it against the wall at the Mythcon 29 book toss! Did I mention it's not great literature? But did I also mention that I laughed out loud repeatedly? That's my measure of humor in the written form: do I embarrass myself while reading it in public places? I can't compare *Maskerade* with Pratchett's other Discworld stories because Pat Reynolds still won't let me take any out of her house (rats!) but I am determined to start haunting the public library and practice laughing in an insane and threatening manner. That and reading more Terry Pratchett.

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MARY DORIA RUSSELL, *The Sparrow* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1997, isbn 0-449-91255-8, tp, \$12.00); *Children of God* (New York: Villard Books, 1998, isbn 0-679-45635-X, hardcover, \$23.95). Reviewed by Matthew Scott Winslow.

The Sparrow created a huge splash in both the speculative fiction and mainstream genres when it first appeared. It was followed up this year by a sequel, *Children of God* (and Russell promises no more books in the series). *The Sparrow* won the Tiptree Award and was a nominee for the 1998 MFA. It deserves every award it gets.

The Sparrow tells the story of Earth's first encounter with an alien species and the problems that arise from it. The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) has finally borne fruit: in 2019, Jimmy Quinn, a radio astronomer in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, hears a strange music that he eventually locates as coming from Alpha Centauri. The Jesuits, led by Emilio Sandoz, a Jesuit friend of Quinn's, immediately organize and send an expedition to make contact, *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*, "for the greater glory of God." Arriving on Rakhat, in the Alpha Centauri system, the Jesuit party makes innocent mistake after innocent mistake, ending with Sandoz disgraced and everyone else dead. Upon Sandoz's return to earth, a panel of Jesuits is established to find out exactly what happened. The novel takes two narrative paths to reveal what happens: one that follows the expedition and one that follows Emilio's sufferings back on earth as he comes to terms with himself and the will of God (Whom he blames for all that happened).

The strength of *The Sparrow* comes not from its plot (which is fairly typical in speculative fiction), but from its ability to draw the reader into the agonies of its characters, especially those of Emilio Sandoz, the sparrow of the title (cf. *Matthew* 10:29 for the title reference). In fact, the novel is uncharacteristic of much science fiction by the richness of its characters. Reading *The Sparrow* is like reading an Iris Murdoch book, but with a storyline that actually moves forward and comes to some sort of resolution. Even though the deaths of the major characters are known from the beginning due to the double-narrative structure, they are still mourned when they actually occur.

Perhaps most important, this novel deals with its issues in a frank and honest manner. Jane Yolen has observed that fantasy is about those things we'd be embarrassed to mention at a cocktail party: honor, courage, loyalty, faith. Unfortunately, much speculative fiction either reads as if we *were* at a cocktail party, insipid and boring, not wanting to tackle any issues; or it goes the other direction and

spoon-feeds the reader all the answers. Russell leaves questions unanswered, but frames them so well that the reader must address them in order to come to some resolution about the book. As Russell says in the interview in the back of the trade paperback edition of the book, "We seem to believe that if we act in accordance with our understanding of God's will, we ought to be rewarded. But in doing so we're making a deal that God didn't sign onto." And that is where we are left: wondering what our role is in God's will and whether we are just a bit too vain in trying to understand it.

Children of God, the sequel to *The Sparrow*, is a well-written, tight novel that creates depths and heights of pathos in the reader that few works nowadays can achieve. It is, however, the second book in the series and thus a comparison to *The Sparrow* is inevitable, and so we are not seeing as much critical response to it. Still, it is a book well worth being read on its own merits. Like its predecessor, *Children of God* employs two story lines that are separated not only by locale, but also by time, and that eventually merge at story's end for an emotional climax. The book begins almost immediately after *The Sparrow* ends with Emilio Sandoz on the road to recovery from his horrific ordeal on Rakhat. The Society of Jesus is planning another expedition to Rakhat, this time funded by outside sources. Emilio agrees to help with the language training but refuses even to consider going back. Meanwhile, we discover that one member of the original party is still alive on Rakhat. Even after discovering this, Emilio is still adamant about not going, but eventually the Jesuits manage to get him on the spaceship.

Taken together, *The Sparrow* and *Children of God* form an incredible tale of the suffering and questioning of faith of a man many inside the story consider a saint. While both books are written with science fiction trappings, they transcend the genre to explore the details and workings of faith.

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DOROTHY L. SAYERS AND JILL PATON WALSH, *Thrones, Dominations*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. ISBN 0-312-18196-5, \$23.95 (hardback). Reviewed by Mary Kay Kare.

Dorothy Sayers abandoned the writing of *Thrones, Dominations* sometime between 1936 and 1938. Though she did not complete the story, it was saved, and has now been finished for us by Jill Paton Walsh. And may I say I find Ms Walsh a very brave woman: attempting to finish a mystery novel by one of the field's most respected and adored authors is no minor undertaking. Fortunately for us all, she appears to have been up to the task.

The story begins in a Paris restaurant shortly after the unfortunate events detailed in *Busman's Honeymoon*. Peter and Harriet, still newlyweds and on their way back to London, encounter his uncle Paul Delgardie in the restaurant and he introduces them to another couple, Laurence and Rosamund Harwell. The Harwells have been married a couple of years and are notoriously besotted with each other. As the novel develops slowly (the murder isn't reported until more than 1/3 of the way through), the lives of the two couples become entwined in various ways.

The novel is really almost more of a romance than a mystery. The relationship between the husband and wife of each couple is difficult and touchy, and the two are designed to mirror each other in a distorted fashion. Harriet and Peter are described this way, "My nephew is nervous, fastidious and inhibited; my niece by marriage, obstinate, energetic and independent. They are both possessed of a truly diabolical pride. Mayfair is awaiting with interest the result of this curious matrimonial experiment." The Harwells are less easily summed up, but she is unsure of herself and thus of him and his affection for her and handles the situation most unwisely. Mr. Harwell is used to having his own way and adores his wife in a most unhealthy manner.

As we watch the developments in both relationships, the joint authors lead us to think

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about the relationship between Man and Woman, as it is and as it should be. Though I've always considered Peter and Harriet just a shade too sensitive and delicate (really, at times over Sayer's oeuvre one wanted to slap them both and tell them to get over it) this is not quite the case in this book. There has, I think, been some inevitable modernization, and while it may not have been exactly what Sayer would have done with her characters, I believe it fits nicely.

There are other distorted mirror images throughout the book in various places: the play of a woman who killed her lover and Harriet's past, Harriet's continued work and Rosamund's lack of outside interests, the plot of Harriet's book and the 'real life' mystery she and Peter are working out, and even the courtship and marriage of Bunter. Watching the echoes and twists was nearly as fascinating as the plot, though not nearly so fascinating as watching the development of the relationship between Harriet and Peter. The strongest disquiet I felt in the book was that it seemed far too neat and even a tidying up of all loose ends. And I'm not at all sure Sayers would approve of all the changes. It's hard to imagine a married Bunter.

In the end, the mystery is solved, and the problem of how Harriet and Peter are to relate to each other in their new circumstances is solved. Perhaps the ends tied up a little too neatly, but that is a small quibble after all. And I found the dialog quite brilliant: Peter sounded just as he ought and so did Harriet. The scene where Peter's godmother comes to call is quite hilarious and one of the most enjoyable things I've read in quite some time.

On the whole I recommend this book most highly. As a confirmed addict of Sayers, having re-read the canon countless times and, as required, fallen in love with Peter, I was most apprehensive of this book, but delightfully surprised. I can't think of any other post-mortem collaboration or continuation I've found so satisfying. I think you'll enjoy it.

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- Due out in January 1999 from Wesleyan University Press: *A Barfield Reader*, edited by G.B. Tennyson. From the catalog: "This comprehensive overview supplements major selections with numerous short supporting passages from the whole corpus of his writings and provides a glossary of Barfieldian terms and useful primary and secondary bibliographies." Entirely different from the *Barfield Sampler* that was published a few years ago, the *Reader* will be available in hardcover (\$45) and trade pb (\$18.95) editions.

- *The Complete Pegana* by Lord Dunsany, edited and with an introduction by S.T. Joshi. Includes *The Gods of Pegana* (originally published in 1905), *Time and the Gods* (1906), and the three stories gathered as the section "Beyond the Fields We Know" which appeared in *Tales of Three Hemispheres* (1919). Published February 1998 by Chaosium Inc. in trade paperback (ISBN 1-56882-116-6, \$12.95).

- Available in October 1998: a new edition of *The Silmarillion* by J.R.R. Tolkien from Houghton Mifflin. Illustrated by Ted Nasmith, this hardcover will include 18 color plates and cost \$35.00.

- *C.S. Lewis: Writer, Dreamer, and Mentor* by Lionel Adey was published in March 1998 by Eerdmans, \$22 hardcover. Zondarvan published *The C.S. Lewis Reader's Encyclopedia*, edited by Jeffrey D. Schultz, in June 1998 at \$29.99.

- *Steering the Craft: Exercises and Discussions on Story Writing for the Lone Navigator or the Mutinous Crew*, by Ursula K. Le Guin, was published by Eighth Mountain Press in April 1998, and is available in hardcover (\$22.95) and trade paperback (\$14.95) editions.

- *Dark Lord of Derkholm*, a new YA fantasy by Diana Wynne Jones, will be published by Greenwillow Books, William Morrow & Co. (\$16.00 hardcover) in October 1998.

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