



# Eirelan

*Liam O'Shiel*

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## **Eirelan** Liam O'Shiel

"As Uinseann often says, we must be content with life and love and the beauty of the Earth. All the rest is dust in the wind." - Liadan Conmaicne Laigain.

Enter into a familiar world that is unfamiliar, a friendly world that is threatening, a world where honor and sacrifice are expected of all. You will meet many wonderful people in this world, and some not so wonderful at all. Conor, Fethnaid, Oran, Liadan, Padraic, Mairin, Aideen, Uinseann, Bradaigh -- they travel a road unlike ours. It is a dangerous road, yet one well worth exploring.

In Eirelan you will live for two months with men and women, old and young, fighters and writers, poets and ship captains, who cannot take for granted that anything they treasure will survive another year, let alone be the inheritance of their children. They dream of a life without fear and struggle. They long for a life filled with love and family and friendships instead of bloodshed and loss and desperate undertakings.

The first of five books set in this time and place, Eirelan tells the story of a two-month struggle for existence fought in the Province Year 999, also known as AD 3953.

## **Eirelan Details**

Date : Published November 11th 2011 (first published November 10th 2011)

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Author : Liam O'Shiel

Format : Paperback 793 pages

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## **From Reader Review Eirelan for online ebook**

### **Shahrún says**

First I have to tell you that I won this book through GoodReads First Reads Giveaways. Second, this review is all my own opinion!

I was rather impressed by the cover and size of the book. A little intimidated too, I confess, but what a journey these pages took me on! When I first got going with it, I was a little irritated by things that didn't make sense. As I got further engrossed in the story I discovered why. This book is set approximately 2000 years in the future! What a great idea! I like the way things seem to have gone back in time, from how we are now (in the Age of Machines) to Middle Agesish, but better. I really enjoyed how the story moved forwards by spending personal time with each of the main characters. We always had to leave them when I wasn't ready. Then, thankfully rejoining them later where we'd last left them, so all the blanks were filled in. Great story telling, on an epic scale (along the same lines as Wilbur Smith). I eagerly await further instalments!

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### **Flora Smith says**

This was a book that I won from First Reads and I appreciate the opportunity to review it.

This was a truly epic read. I would have actually given this 4.5 stars but because it was so well written I rounded up to 5. This is the epic story set 1000 years after the Age of Machines in Ireland. The Twenty Clans are fighting for the very survival against clans to the north as well as enemies across the sea in Spain. This story is woven together, layer upon layer, and is filled with characters that are brought to life and full of complexities. We see not only the war and the struggles that they face with their enemies, but also the struggles of their day to day lives. Not only do we see this story from the perspective of the Twenty Clans, we are also given a glimpse of life from the perspective of their enemies. We see how hard life is for the people that live to the north of them and what motivates them to try to invade. We see leftovers of our own culture and politics and how it is still influencing wars and control. In the midst of all this we learn of their past, which is our present. How the Age of Machines drew to a close as technology became our destruction as well as the damage left to the environment. This leaves a civilization essentially as it was in the Middle Ages with travel by ships and horses and war with swords and the bow, but set amidst the ruin of great cities of today. One thing that would have made this work even better would have been the inclusion of a map. I would have loved to be able to better visualize the location of towns as well as where the allies and enemies of the Twenty Clans were situated. This is quite a large book (almost 800pgs) and a bit daunting at first glance but it is very well written and keeps you interested til the very end. There are places that are a bit descriptive and while the story does benefit from such passages with this being such a lengthy read I could have done without them. Overall, I loved this book and am looking forward to the next in this series.

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### **Jim says**

Set eighteen centuries into the future of Ireland, this is a well thought out lengthy work of possibility. It's a future where war is commonplace and technology has regressed to sailing ships, bows, and swords; machines are nonexistent. The tale follows events in the Province of the Twenty Clans, a nation state in southeastern

Ireland, and the fates of its leaders and their families. This portion of the province creed gives an insightful glimpse into their culture: "In our hearts we value our fellow man, hate no one, take from no one, rule over no one. With our minds we see that all life is a mystery, and death a part of the unending cycle of the world. We fight as we must, to defend our right to live and partake of the wonders of the earth." (pg.699)

I enjoyed this book and found that both the small details of life and the grand battles were right on, but I did see some problems. There are many instances of a lack of proofreading throughout the text and I think the work would benefit from additional editing. For example, although well written, chapter 24 seems only peripherally attached to the rest of the story. However, I do look forward to reading O'Shiel's next installment.

Thanks Goodreads for another First Reads win!

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### **Nina says**

I was luck to receive this book from first-reads.

This book is set in the future - however people have forsaken technology, and so they live in times that look a bit like the Middle Ages. The story revolves around the war and its effects on the people surrounding it.

The author has created some very lovable characters. Although the book is long in length, it doesn't feel as long at it is because each chapter is told from the perspective of a different character, which keeps the story fresh and gives the reader interesting viewpoints on shared experiences. The author brings up a number of ethical dilemmas which the characters face and it leads the reader to reflect on the nature of right and wrong. There is also an interesting exposition of the role of women in society. Overall I found the story very engaging and enjoyed it thoroughly.

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### **N.N. Light says**

While I tend to stay away from books that are tipping towards 800 pages, I found the premise tugging at my heart so I picked it up. It took me a long time to read it and honestly, I found myself getting distracted. Sure, the sweeping narration and the characters were wonderful as I got transported to Eirelan. I think I would've enjoyed it better as two books.

My Rating: 3.5 stars

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### **Anne V. says**

First off, I interrupted my reading of this book with several family emergencies, and I always itched to get back. Second, I have the sequel (In the Bleak Midwinter) on my shelf waiting for me, and I am ready to dive in! Review will be posted on that one as soon as I am done.

The unique premise of Eirelan: Ireland, around 2000 years after the collapse of the tech-forward civilization, has evolved into a low-tech, but not quite medieval society where people of the twenty Clans struggle against

the rising tide of war with the Dubliners and others. The society is full of regular people without superpowers like being super-hot, a zombie, half-robot, or just simply able to save the world by zapping an eye out of a buzzard with a bull whip at 150 yards while looking super-hot wearing leather pants. While it is true that in this novel women 'man' the Navy and men and children man the forts, towers, and walls, they are still just men and women, and even better, just people relating to each other in all the right ways. O'Shiel has fairly treated all genders. Above all, everyone seems to be refreshingly normally abnormal, in an entirely human and endearing way.

Rich in the seamless history of its own making, as well as the authority of its human relationships, the story works its way forward as Conor, Mairin, Aideen, and all the other characters struggle to resolve the lifelong ideology of honor and sacrifice against the fatigue of perpetual loss, struggle, and looming inexorable change. Memorable.

This book has so many positives that I am only going to list some of the standout qualities. It is huge, around 800 pages, but it is not heavy with filler, so is paced to hold the reader's attention and move the story forward at a nice clip. The author is skilled. He chooses language that reflects the time and place he is writing about (though fictional), and it enhances the overall voice of the series. The future low tech society O'Shiel constructs is such a well thought out speculation that it results in near perfect execution of the subtle nuances of a far distant residue of a modern cultural identity. I had to go back and reread parts just to roll around in it.

This series is one of those rare gems found in the plethora of independently published works. I have been pleased to find several lately, but this rises high. Thank you Liam O'Shiel, for all your hard work, I hope to see many more works from you in the future. Not that I shy away from epics, but feel free to make them shorter to get them out faster. Ha!

This review and others at [annevolmering.com](http://annevolmering.com)!

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## **Jessica says**

I won this book as part of a Goodreads Firstreads giveaway.

I must admit the 800 page book seemed like a daunting task. However, it didn't really feel like i was reading 800 pages (except for when i heft the book around). The concept of the story is interesting. Based around Ireland farther into the future than I can fathom, the people have gone from the Age of Machines back to the "olden" days of horse & bugging and sail/wind powered ships. The people of the Province live behind a wall and defend it against invaders trying to take what they have. There aren't any futuristic aspects of the book and with the exception of the random references to the Age of Machines and the fallen crumbling concrete structures of ancient times, you forget that you are reading a book set in the future.

The characters are colorful but I felt a hard time really connecting to them. I didn't have any strong feelings of love them, hate them, or feel sorry for them that I like in what I consider an excellent read. There were several times I felt like skimming through some of the more mundane details that could have been left out and still provided the reader with a good story. The story ends with lots of loose ends for the author to tie up in the sequel.

It's an interesting read as a piece of fiction but one that I could read or pass on the sequel.

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## **Ian says**

I approached Eirelan's near 800 pages with some trepidation. As a Member Giveaway win at LibraryThing I knew I would feel obligated to complete it and make an assessment, however it felt like a book I may be interested in and I hoped it wouldn't be a chore.

I need not have been concerned; Eirelan is a fabulous page turner, epic in scope, beautifully crafted and skillfully structured to maintain the reader's attention.

It takes an enormous leap of imagination though to pitch a story 4000 years in the future and make it completely devoid of any science fiction. In fact O'Shiel has written a medieval drama and by setting it in a future era so far away from any scope of existing expectations he has cleverly avoided being burdened by any need for historical references which may bear scrutiny. We hear vaguely of 'the age of machines' yet it is left entirely to the reader to interpret how or when catastrophe fell and a new world order emerged which resembled that which we hear of in history books. Eirelan is a country we know as Ireland which is partitioned into The Province, a rural, heathen, haven, and the world outside its ramparts made up of crumbling cities to which the old Church still holds sway.

Once you get past some oddly fanciful scene setting of nautical terminology, cosy games of poker, pub lunches, Irish stew, and pints of stout, you are thrown into a world of warriors, clans, and feuds, families and lovers, politics, and fierce battles on land and at sea.

Belief suspended, the story telling comes to the fore and O'Shiel creates characters to believe in, varied and complex, human and troubled, real and easy to relate to and come to know.

The people of The Province have endured attacks for centuries which have reached a critical point at which survival of their way of life is threatened for good. Concurrent battles need to be fought and won against foes at home and abroad, and for which old adversaries are needed to become allies to withstand the onslaught from common enemies. O'Shiel uses a deep knowledge of maritime matters to good effect without alienating a reader rooted to the land and whose only experience of the sea around Eirelan is the 'vomit comet' trips from Holyhead to Dublin, 1960s style.

In O'Shiel's Eirelan women and men are equal in the family, in politics and in armed service. It is the women in the main that command the warships, and women fight skillfully and doggedly amongst the Blades and the Bows. No guns here, only swords, armour, pikes, maces, and arrows which are used to brutal effect.

The stories and relationships within the story are well woven and flow seamlessly such that it would be easy to imagine Eirelan as a blockbuster movie or serious TV drama series.

At no point in the near 800 pages did I find myself struggling or wishing the book to end, indeed I am looking forward to the author's promised second installment and to enjoying the company of Connor, Oran, Feth, Mairan, Aideen, and their families, friends and comrades once again.

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## **Sheldon Frank says**

As a fan of historical fiction, I found Eirelan to be an exciting, action packed novel unfolded during a future time but with parallels to the past.

The book is filled with action and family dynamics. I eagerly anticipated each new chapter and what was to unfold.

I am looking forward to the sequel.

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## Jeff says

First, I will say that I enjoyed this book - I won it from a Goodreads giveaway. It was one that involved many of my literary interests as well as good writing in general. In the past I have enjoyed many 'maritime' novels and of course the battle and adventure classics such as LOTR and Jules Verne's work. I believe Mr. O'Shiel did a fantastic job of creating a riveting plot and keeping interest on multiple lines, following multiple people and multiple areas.

This book caught me a little off guard because of the futuristic aspect. It is not heavily portrayed, and for that reason, I usually forgot that the characters live about the year 3700. Every once in a great while something would be said or in item would be mentioned that sounded off. In the end you have covered over 700 pages and only on about 10 of them would you feel like something was out of place. The rest of the time you are in a world of medieval and Celtic history. The names and places may be real and properly used, but no one would be able to tell unless they were well versed in the ancient languages of the British isles.

I appreciate much of what O'Shiel has done. He has brought originality, apparent authenticity in the old cultures, and he has done it cleanly. I see too much in literature that is meant to shock and entangle the reader. Although this book has more sensual scenes than I truly care for, it at least is very tasteful and the foul language has been kept to a minimum. It was not one of the things that was brought from the "age of machines" to the provincial time. Thanks Mr. O'Shiel

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## Annette says

Eirelan by Liam O'Sheil was a Goodreads win

Was attracted by the cover of this book – monochrome, A Celtic cross against a stormy sky above rolling waves. It looked mysterious, and I wanted to find out more.

The Province of the twenty clans in Eireland (Ireland) is about to celebrate its millennium. It was founded in the old calendar year of 2954, so is set in 3954 – about 2,000 years into the future. Most stories of the future feature space travel and technology, but this story is very different. The Age of machines has come to a terrible end. It is mentioned as a dim distance memory in the way we would think of the stone or iron age, interesting but irrelevant to present life. All the people who knew about technology have gone, or perhaps the idea of technology and the damage it did to the world have made people totally reject it. Life has reverted to a simple living off the land, with peace and harmony with nature.

However, there is an aggressive streak still in humanity, and as food and resources dwindle communities get ready for war. Eirland is a Celtic nation, loosely connected to other Celtic peoples in Cornwall, Wales and Brittany. They seem to be survivors on the edge of Europe, after the fall of the Age of machines. They are linked by trade and the necessity of fighting off the emerging power of Spain. Back in Eireland, the twenty clans have built a wall to keep out invaders from the north, where famine and starvation are driving them to attack the twenty clans land.

The fight to defend the Province is led by Conor, reluctantly as he is a dreamer and a poet, not a warrior. His

sister Fethnaid is fighting in the line of bows, (women archers). His friends are in the blades (men with swords and javelins). There are no guns and communication in by horns, pipes and drums. The army is well trained and disciplined, ready to protect their people, lands and way of life. They reject religion and see themselves as part of nature, with no special life after death status. They celebrate the life they have within the beauty of the natural world. The remnants of religious faith in the North of the country see them as pagans, and want to take them over.

On sea, oak built, sailing war ships protect the land and are fighting the Spanish. Mairin, Connors fiancé is the captain leading the fleet. An interesting twist is female equality, the fleet is manned by women, not men.

The book is long, and filled with descriptions and adventures on land and sea as the battles threaten, then commence. The characters and settings are well portrayed and you feel involved with the story. You forget the book is set in the future, it could have been pre industrial revolution, not after the age of machines.

It also raises questions. The Bows and Blades have resplendent, colourful uniforms – no need for camouflage with no guns to fire at them. I wondered were the uniforms had been made, as there is no mention of industry. Were they, along with swords, armour, and bows created by cottage industry?

Education was seen as important, but there was no mention of its purpose. Was it just to instil culture and tradition, or was there a vocational element. Not much of the age of machines had been passed down, but John Mansfield's poem 'I must go down to the sea again' was accurately remembered. Young people are going straight from school to defence, no mention of those who run the country – unless it's just middle aged and elderly folks. There is mention of people fighting, and if they survive, marrying and raising children. There is a lot of tea drinking, yet trade is quite local - do they have herbal teas from Celtic plants?

As you read the book, you think it is in the present, so it jolts to hear of mourning doves and mocking birds in Eirland, when in our day they would be in North America. Is that intentional to show how nature has changed over the millenniums?

I found it a well written book, which kept me interested all through, and I think it was very thought provoking too. We assume our Age of Machines is the pinnacle of achievement, but maybe it is our downfall too.

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## **Richard says**

In full disclosure I won this book in a Good Reads Giveaway.

Eirelan is a story set about 1800 years in our future. Due to some event, technology and society has fallen back to a pre-gunpowder era. It is mostly set in Ireland (or Eirelan as it is referred to in the book) although some parts do occur in Britain and the west coast of Europe. It follows several characters, most of whom know each other, and the struggles they face in an upcoming war against other factions of their world.

This was a very hard book to rate, most parts are excellent, other parts are only average or let down by various (mostly minor) issues.

Probably the biggest problem, was the lack of a map and an appendix. The map is needed as the characters often talk of places around their world, but without a map it can be hard to follow where they are talking



about. There are several main characters and many secondary ones, with such a large cast of characters many of whom have unusual names it can be hard remember who a particular character is when they come back into the story, an appendix with a list of the characters and a short description of who they are would have made this much easier. Most of this information can be found on the books helpful website [www.eirelan.com](http://www.eirelan.com), and I believe this will also be included in the books second edition.

The story itself is excellent overall, it started of slightly weak and disjointed, but as it progressed it got stronger and by the end it was an excellent and well written story. The descriptions of the visuals and events are very well written and it is very easy to see the world and follow what is going on.

At the start of each chapter is a short piece of writing, typically a journal entry, letter or poem written by one characters. I loved these parts as it often gave great insights into the characters and really helps you connect with them.

The characters in the book are excellent, they have realistic and interesting personalities. Some are adventurous or career ambitious others are more thoughtful and want a quiet life. The thoughts and feelings that they have are very well written. The relationships they all have is written excellently, some of them get on very well, others do not, but all are handled well and realistically. I especially enjoyed the relationship between Connar and his Aide Bradaigh. Having said that I did think characters tended to fall in love with each other far too easily and unrealistically. They would meet, get along well and a couple of chapters later they are declaring their deep love for one another, and this happens to several of the characters.

The grief the characters face over the death of comrades, friends and family is beautifully written. As well as the fears they have for their comrades, friends and those serving under them during the pre-battle sequences.

A few times in the book, we depart from the main characters and have a chapter based around someone from the enemy faction, each of characters only have one chapter written about them. These parts of the book are handled very intelligently and show that even those who are the main characters enemies are ordinary people with family that they love and care for, and are only their fighting out of necessity.

There were a few minor problems, at times naval terms were used, but not explained making the story harder to follow. There were a few spelling/editing mistakes, although I believe that this is to be corrected in the books second edition. Also several times during the first third of the book long lists are given, for example all the items a character puts into their backpack but the information was never needed and becomes annoying after several of these unneeded lists, as the story progresses these lists disappear. One other minor problem was the use of American English by the Celtic characters, especially considering that their culture and heritage is so important to them.

I enjoyed the ending, especially the fact that there are a few chapters after the final battle to see the characters in a more relaxed setting and to tie up some of the plot points.

Overall I enjoyed this book, especially the characters and the second half of the story. It is beautifully and intelligently written. I am looking forward to this books sequel.

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**TheCosyDragon says**

This review has been crossposted from my blog at The Cosy Dragon . Please head there for more in-depth

reviews by me, which appear on a timely schedule.

Eirelan is a land under constant attack. Wartime has forced thoughts of the family behind battle plans and wounds with no ending in sight. The characters battle for their survival with no real sense of the future being any brighter. This novel documents how the scales begin to tip, and life is even more on a dagger's edge.

The perspective changes in the first couple of chapters gave me unhappy feelings - I like to follow one character, or perhaps two, all the way through the novel otherwise I get confused about their names (I do this in real life too). O'Shiel managed it very well, and despite swapping between the characters, I felt like I was getting to know them well and I could keep track of which was which with ease.

I struggled to get a full picture of the novel's contents. It wasn't clear to me why Eirelan was being invaded in the first place. The first 200 or so pages built for me an image of a series of ever lasting battles, and an impending final push, but I didn't see why that was happening. I couldn't understand why they were fighting, or it was that I didn't care? I didn't get a bigger picture, a sense of climax, just a series of small battles which all were destroying the characters' souls. The dreams that each of the characters had were neatly slipped into the text though. This all improved in the second half of the novel, and I couldn't put it down.

The dialogue often seemed stilted and artificial, as did some of the scenery descriptions. There were also several instances where I noted far too much listing! At the same time though, the information about how a ship works, and the log entries and so forth were valuable and I enjoyed reading them.

I haven't really decided how I feel about chapters starting with little quotes/notes/diary entries since I read the 'Quantum Physics' book which completely put my off quotes. The diary entries and things work well here though, because often it provides a concrete link between the two flanking chapters. That grounding helped with the perspective changes.

Conor is obsessed with his dream of the cottage and children. I can understand it, but I'm not sure why he feels compelled to bring it up with everyone he meets. Things in Marien's past are hinted at slowly and subtly, and I really felt like I was guessing correctly - a bit of mystery was good all the way through.

I liked the undertones of Marien and Conor's relationship, and the swift decisions that must be made in wartime. It all seemed a little incestuous really because everyone seemed to have known each other for an age before they became partners. That wasn't a negative for me at all because it made it easier for me to keep track of them.

A sign that I loved this book was that by the time I was nearing the last 200 pages or so I was dreading getting to the end because I loved the characters so much. Why did some of them have to die? Ah yes, the battle scenes were excellent, even though the perspective changed a fair bit there too, and I really wanted to skip ahead to find out what was going to happen next for that particular character.

There are deeper themes in this book too, the endless cycle of war and peace that even our current world seems unable to let go of. It seems to be human nature - but what this novel tries to point out is that we are all humans, and we all are essentially the same when it comes to having families and loving each other.

I usually love Celtic/Gaelic literature, and I wasn't disappointed by this novel despite a couple of nit-picky things I have mentioned (as always, I find it easier to comment on the bad rather than the good). It was one of the few Goodreads: First Reads books that I had marked as to-read before I even knew I had won it. I was super excited to receive it in the mail and set about reading it right there and then. It has caused me to neglect

other things I should be doing - a sign that it's a good one!

I've marked this book as both fantasy and historical fiction. I don't think it's strictly either - although it is not obvious til the second half of the book, it is set in the future (if I missed it in the first half, it was because I was too engrossed in the characters). Fantasy to me involves magic and impossible things - something that this novel lacks. But then again, it's not really historical fiction (as far as my limited knowledge tells me), because of the women being allowed to fight (it seems like all of the women are on ships or are Bows) and having political roles. Eirelan sounds almost exactly like Ireland! And at one point, there is a map shown to Marien which has England and other 'real' countries on it.

I'd likely recommend this book for adults and teens who like Celtic/Gaelic fiction and enjoy a good battle scene. For some reason it feels to me like a teenage book, but the descriptions of violence make me suggest it is for older teens. I guess there is not as much depth as I expect for a purely adult book, although it is certainly thick enough to be one at almost 800 pages.

4.5 stars from me (from Goodreads) and I can't wait to read the second novel in this series. Earlier reviews have complained of typos in the kindle copy, the majority of those have been ironed out in my beautiful hard copy with creamy pages.

I received this book to review through the Goodreads: First Reads program, but I was not compensated in any other way to write a positive review. All opinions are my own and unbiased despite receiving a free book.

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### **Lianne says**

*Eirelan* had an interesting premise but I found that the story lagged too much, making it difficult not only to engage with the characters but also the entire point of the story (the goals of the characters, of who/why they're fighting, etc). Some of the story threads and characters piqued my interest but there's so much focus on the battle preparation/battle exposition/the waiting in between that I just lost my interest. Fans of military detail in fantasy or even historical fiction will enjoy this novel but I personally found it too slow for my liking. I did however think that the Celtic elements infused in the Province's culture was well done.

My complete review of the novel was originally posted at **caffeinatedlife.net**:  
<http://www.caffeinatedlife.net/blog/2...>

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### **Stephanie says**

An excellent concept, but poor execution. I loved the idea of a future culture which had returned to the clan system and rejected technology. For someone who loves the Celtic culture of the Dark ages, the lure of a book which seemed to promise the rich lore and close family structures had a strong appeal for me.

But the characters somehow felt flat in the face of the plot. I'm not afraid of a long book (it's almost 800 pages) if I find the characters engaging. Indeed, the length is a plus in such cases, because I want to spend as much time as possible with these people. But a well written character takes on a life of it's own, and the warmth and richness of a fully realized individual was absent here. The power of this culture was absent,

everything apart from the plot seemed flat.

Sorry, I couldn't finish this one. It just never engaged me. Reading it became more of a chore than a joy.

And a note to the author, Liam O'Shiel: All you really need to do, is to tell me a good story.

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