

Pullman

The Urth list — 5 messages, 4 voices, 26 Apr 2001

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akt — 26 Apr 2001, 16:08

vizcacha:

The witches reminded me of the witches in the Kalevala, which is a nice change from the usual witches one meets in fantasy. The concept of the daemons was well-done and well-elaborated, with some unexpected but well-thought-out twists in the later books (e.g., why do we not have daemons?).

Well, sure! They're Lapland witches! Shakepeare, Milton and Goethe all refer to Lapland witches and I couldn't have been more thrilled to meet them, and so wonderfully described. A couple of the very best Xena eps have her running up against a Northern shamaness/witch. (I hope you appreciate the cultural juxtaposition.) There is also a rather pornographic Fuseli painting of them; you can find it on the Web--not Pullman's witches, for sure. And, hey, vizcacha, some of us on this list

**do* have daemons--you do yourself ;-)*

Unfortunately, starting even in the first book, but getting worse in the second and still worse in the third, Pullman lets his fantasy get out of control. What many authors of fantasy forget is that if anything is possible, nothing is interesting. Eventually so many rabbits are pulled out of so many hats that the dramatic tension in the story just vanishes, and all you are doing is following the plot to see how it works out. (The SF equivalent, I suppose, is the "inventing a space-drive using the contents of your junk drawer" story, or any Star Trek episode).

To which Adam replied, making me LOL:

Or the protagonist suddenly discovering he can travel in spirit to other planets? <g>

Actually, the only place in the second book (perhaps aside from the many coincidences) that I thought went too far was the angels sending a message via Dr Malone's computer OTOH many people do find gremlins in their computers!

Did you all like Hester? She was my favorite daemon. (I haven't yet read Book 3.)

-alga

William Ansley — 26 Apr 2001, 23:09 · follows akt

At 4:08 PM -0400 4/26/01, <akt at attglobal.net> wrote:
Did you all like Hester? She was my favorite daemon. (I haven't yet read Book 3.)

alga,

Hester was my favorite, too. I also thought the armored bears and the witches were very well done.

I'm glad you are enjoying the books. I hope your enjoyment continues through book 3.

William Ansley

Alice Turner — 28 Apr 2001, 11:09 · follows William Ansley

vizcacha inquired:

Which play is the Shakespeare reference in? And where in Milton?

That's

interesting. I've always had a soft spot for Finnish mythology (which I know isn't quite the same as Lapland mythology, but hey...). When I was a kid I discovered Emil Petaja's series which was a thinly disguised _Kalevala_, and loved it. I have to admit I've only Xena'd a few times, and not seen any Lapland witches. One of my Everquest characters (admission of addiction here) is a shaman, and they are very fun to play.

Sure, these are but imaginary wiles
And Lapland sorcerers inhabit here.

Comedy of Errors Act 4--hmm. that's not quite right; the girls are called witches several times in the same scene, and I think there's a reference, though it may be indirect, in Midsummer Night's Dream.

Farr less abhorrd then these
Vex'd SCYLLA bathing in the Sea that parts
CALABRIA from the hoarce TRINACRIAN shore:
Nor uglier follow the Night-Hag, when call'd
In secret, riding through the Air she comes
Lur'd with the smell of infant blood, to dance
With LAPLAND Witches, while the labouring Moon
Eclipses at thir charms.

Paradise Lost, Book 2

What is Emil Petaja's series? The shamaness witch in Xena was a very bad hat, a worthy opponent, and the eps (3, I think) were quite thrilling, with a lot of wire work a la Crouching Tiger. I don't suppose Finnish and Lap mythology differs much, but "Finnish witches" doesn't have the uncanny sound of "Lapland witches."

I'm 135 pages into Book 3 and already I feel that the writer is flagging. Those critters that Dr. Malone finds with the wheels and trunks seem plain silly to me, ditto the giant birds with the malevolent poops.

-alga

Alice Turner — 29 May 2001, 20:29 · follows Alice Turner

Have you tried spelling Sir Charles Latrom's name backwards?

-alga

Spectacled Bear — 30 May 2001, 10:47 · follows Alice Turner

At 01:29 2001-05-30, Alice Turner wrote:

Have you tried spelling Sir Charles Latrom's name backwards?

Indeed, though I'm not at all sure what the significance is!

SBear.