

Witches, Daemons, Bears, Democrats

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 27 Apr 2001

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David Lebling — 27 Apr 2001, 09:21

From: <akt at attglobal.net>

Well, sure! They're Lapland witches! Shakespeare, 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.

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.

And, hey, vizcacha, some of us on this list

do have daemons--you do yourself ;-)

Of course I have a daemon!

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!

That was precisely the thing I was thinking of in the second book. It read exactly like those old five-minute-space-drive stories.

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

Yes, but the bears were my absolute favorite. I think I've read only one other story where bears have a civilization (as opposed to stories where bears are intelligent -- even Tolkien did that, and I don't count "When Bears Discover Fire"). I think it was a Poul Anderson story, but I can't recall the title. I just remember the bears were very bearish, rather than just big humans in fur coats.

From: William Ansley <wansley at warwick.net>

I was bothered enough to do so not because of the anti-religious message itself, but because of the vehemence with which Pullman presents it and because these books are putatively for children, who are likely, even in this day and age, to possess much less sophistication than those who write here.

Well, neither of my daughters have had any difficulty with that aspect so far. Nor, for that matter, did they have any difficulty with the explicitly pro-Christian messages in the Narnia books. It's true that the religious aspect of His Dark Materials gets stronger as it goes along, especially in the third book, which they haven't gotten to yet. They don't have any strong

religious beliefs for the book to offend; we go to a Unitarian Universalist church, the only sacrosanct belief system there is that of the Democratic party.

Dave Lebling
aka vizcacha

Jesper Svedberg — 28 Apr 2001, 23:00 · follows David Lebling

From: "David Lebling" <dlebling at ucentric.com>
Subject: Witches, Daemons, Bears, Democrats
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The odd thing is that we don't seem to have a concept of Lapland witches here in Sweden. It's probably one of those things that are more common the further away from the real thing you are, we probably just thought they were savages. If you like Kalevala you should try to get a hold of Ian Watson's Lucky's Harvest, the first volume of "Book of MANA" sequence, which is a Planetary Romance/Fantasy also based on Kalevala.

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The Bear Went Over the Mountain by William Kotzwinkle might interest you as well, although that is perhaps more of an intelligent bear novel than a bear civilization novel.

If you like Pullman or haven't got anything against reading juveniles, you should check out one of my absolute favourites, Diana Wynne Jones, who Wolfe has also recommended in an interview somewhere. Jones writes absolutely wonderful, magical and funny novels and like Wolfe, she often play games with time and perspectives. The best starting point is probably the rather Wolfean Archer's Goon, one of her funniest and most original novels, in which a British family is terrorized by a family of magicians who runs the city they live in. Other books especially worth look up are Fire and Hemlock, her most frequently praised novel which I have yet to read, my personal favourite, The Lives of Christopher Chant, a novel set in an alternate Victorian England about a boy who travels to other worlds in his sleep, The Powers of Three and Howl's Moving Castle.

// Jesper Svedberg