

New Wolfe essay

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 11 Dec 2001

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Matthew Davis — 11 Dec 2001, 19:33

There's an essay by Wolfe about Tolkien in December's "Interzone": "The Best Introduction to the Mountains". It's mostly autobiographical: how he discovered LOTR in 1956, the experience of reading it, poetic inscriptions he made in the individual volumes, and the transcript of a letter from Tolkien to Wolfe.

In particular Wolfe praises the books because their medieval setting embodies a system of social order and responsibilities, of defined duties and freedoms - the Christian order itself, even if there is no sight of God himself in the books.

Curiously, the ultra-Catholic Lafferty despised LOTR because he thought it was a diminished fantasy world of second-hand people and concepts with a big fence set up around it and a flashing sign that proclaimed "God Keep Out!".

Matthew Davis

Jerry Friedman — 12 Dec 2001, 23:52 · follows Matthew Davis

--- Matthew Davis <matthew at michaelscycles.freemove.co.uk> wrote:
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"No sight of God" is literally true, but God is busily arranging coincidences, prophetic dreams, and stuff like that. Sort of like TBotNS, as a matter of fact. I wonder whether Tolkien was Wolfe's model in that book.

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It's also interesting, at least to me, that as a child I felt a bit betrayed when I realized that _The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe_ was Christian propaganda, and I'm glad LotR didn't do that

to me. Obviously I've gotten over this, since I like Wolfe.

Jerry Friedman