

The Best Introduction To The Mountains

The Urth list — 9 messages, 7 voices, 31 Dec 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2876>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Andy Robertson — 31 Dec 2001, 18:38

Hello, and are Urth and The Whorl still turning?

Recently INERZONE published an essay by Gene Wolfe, explaining what The Lord Of The Rings meant to him.

I was very impressed by Wolfe's words, and I purchased from him the right to display the essay on my own website.

I am foolish enough to believe that the essay says some important things about Tolkien's work. At any rate it moved me deeply.

If you should be interested, it is at:

<http://home.clara.net/andywrobertson/docindex.html>

Andy Robertson

Steve Strickland — 31 Dec 2001, 23:44 · follows Andy Robertson

Mr. Robertson,

Many thanks! Tolkien and Wolfe are without a doubt the two authors who've resonated most strongly with me over the last 25 years or so, so an essay by one about the other is a dream come true. Naturally, when I heard about the Wolfe article, I looked long and hard for the INTERZONE issue, but was too late.

Wow! A very nice article.

Thanks again.

Steve Strickland

----- Original Message -----

From: "Andy Robertson" <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk>
To: <urth at lists1.ba.best.com>
Sent: Monday, December 31, 2001 12:38 PM
Subject: (urth) The Best Introduction To The Mountains
Hello, and are Urth and The Whorl still turning?

Recently INERZONE published an essay by Gene Wolfe, explaining what The Lord Of The Rings meant to him.

I was very impressed by Wolfe's words, and I purchased from him the right to display the essay on my own website.

I am foolish enough to believe that the essay says some important things about Tolkien's work. At any rate it moved me deeply.

If you should be interested, it is at:

<http://home.clara.net/andywrobertson/docindex.html>

Andy Robertson

works

Hubert Rogers — 01 Jan 2002, 13:23 · follows Steve Strickland

This is truely a masterpiece of an essay, very interesting ideas about society. If only Tolkien lived to read Gene Wolfe's books...

----- Original Message -----

From: "Andy Robertson" <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk>
To: <urth at lists1.ba.best.com>
Sent: Monday, December 31, 2001 6:38 PM
Subject: (urth) The Best Introduction To The Mountains
Hello, and are Urth and The Whorl still turning?

Recently INERZONE published an essay by Gene Wolfe, explaining what The Lord Of The Rings meant to him.

I was very impressed by Wolfe's words, and I purchased from him the right to display the essay on my own website.

I am foolish enough to believe that the essay says some important things about Tolkien's work. At any rate it moved me deeply.

If you should be interested, it is at:

<http://home.clara.net/andywrobertson/docindex.html>

Andy Robertson

works

Andy Robertson — 01 Jan 2002, 19:59 · follows Hubert Rogers

Uh. Sorry, guys. I thought the list was down and have now spammed a load of you , , , Is the Whorl list still up? Where are the archives for it and Urth?

:-\

--- *** ---

Yes, it's a fantastic essay. I believe it positions Wolfe as a conscious inheritor of Lewis and Tolkien - far more *deliberately* using his art in the service of his political and social ideals than he has ever acknowledged up till now.

It is a great pity (and an utterly not-understandable thing) that it was refused for MEDITATIONS ON MIDDLE-EARTH.

Might I politely ask you all to pass on information about it to anyone who might be interested? I really think it should see book publication, and in fact I have posted it on my web site with the end in mind.

Andy Robertson

Adam Stephanides — 02 Jan 2002, 15:13 · follows Andy Robertson

Thanks for putting this essay on your website, Andy; it's a great service.

I agree that it's an important essay for Wolfe scholars, even if you don't care about Tolkien, as I don't. (Has Wolfe ever mentioned Tolkien in print before?) Some aspects of his work definitely need to be reconsidered in light of it, such as the presentation of the Autarch's rule in BOTNS as the best possible under the circumstances, and of rebellion against it as "Satanic"; and the portrayal of Silk and Silkhorn as "natural leaders." And I may have been too quick, earlier, to dismiss the poster who argued that BOTSS presented examples of "good rule." But then, those elements of the books never appealed to me.

I haven't looked at MEDITATIONS ON MIDDLE-EARTH, but possibly Wolfe's essay was rejected because the image of Tolkien as propagandist for a society in which the lower orders cheerfully obey and serve their betters was not one the editor wanted to project.

Between this and Wolfe's comments on 9-11 I'm learning more about Wolfe's politics than I think I want to know, and I fear for THE WIZARD KNIGHT.

And Terry Brooks again! First Pullman praises him, then Wolfe criticizes his detractors. I've never read him, but can it be that his bad reputation is not entirely deserved?

--Adam

Andy Robertson — 02 Jan 2002, 14:53 · follows Adam Stephanides

----- Original Message -----

From: "Adam Stephanides" <adamsteph at earthlink.net>
Thanks for putting this essay on your website, Andy; it's a great service.
I agree that it's an important essay for Wolfe scholars, even if you don't care about Tolkien, as I don't. (Has Wolfe ever mentioned Tolkien in print before?)

Not as far as I know.

Some aspects of his work definitely need to be reconsidered in light of it, such as the presentation of the Autarch's rule in BOTNS as the best possible under the circumstances, and of rebellion against it as "Satanic"; and the portrayal of Silk and Silkhorn as "natural leaders."

And

I may have been too quick, earlier, to dismiss the poster who argued that BOTSS presented examples of "good rule." But then, those elements of the books never appealed to me.

Me neither, frankly. I always thought Wolfe undermined Severian's moral authority at every turn.

I haven't looked at MEDITATIONS ON MIDDLE-EARTH, but possibly Wolfe's essay was rejected because the image of Tolkien as propagandist for a society in which the lower orders cheerfully obey and serve their betters was not one the editor wanted to project.

But no, no, no, Wolfe is not propagandising for feudalism.

<quote>

There is one very real sense in which the Dark Ages were the brightest of times, and it is this: that they were times of defined and definite duties and freedoms. </quote>

I understand that could be a mistake one would make reading this essay, but he is talking about something much more like libertarianism: freedom, liberty and *property*. . This has absolutely nothing to do with supporting tyranny, (and if conservatism is about supporting tyranny, Wolfe is not a conservative)

<quote>

We might have a society in which the laws were few and just, simple, permanent, and familiar to everyone -- a society in which everyone stood shoulder-to-shoulder because everyone lived by the same changeless rules, and everyone knew what those rules were. When we had it, we would also have a society in which the lack of wealth was not reason for resentment but a spur to ambition, and in which wealth was not a cause for self-indulgence but a call to service.

</quote>

Between this and Wolfe's comments on 9-11 I'm learning more about Wolfe's politics than I think I want to know, and I fear for THE WIZARD KNIGHT.

Wolfe is a Conservative Catholic Christian right-winger. Deal With It!!!!

All his writing from THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS onward (apart from the odd potboiler) has embodied this view of right and wrong.

And Terry Brooks again! First Pullman praises him, then Wolfe criticizes his detractors. I've never read him, but can it be that his bad

reputation
is not entirely deserved?

This I cannot believe, even from the hand of the Wolfe.

--- *** ---

But where are Wolfe's comments on 9/11, pray? I want to read them.

Yours in Conservative hufpuffery

Andy Robertson

John Barach — 02 Jan 2002, 18:42 · follows Andy Robertson

Andy --

Here's Alice's original post re. Wolfe on 9-11.

John

Subject: (urth) take 'em, tiger
Date: Sat, 1 Dec 2001 03:37:38 -0800 (PST)
From: aturner3 <aturner3 at nyc.rr.com>
Reply-To: urth at lists.best.com
To: urth at lists1.ba.best.com

A message from Wolfe:

? Pioneer Press September 27, 2001

A guest essay by Gene Wolfe, published in a Chicago-area local newspaper, is unfortunately not online. Wolfe urges citizens to act quickly, and pressure the politicians to take action...

We will be told that the perpetrators (and only the perpetrators) must be punished, and that the greatest pains must be taken to make certain no innocent person suffers. That sounds much better than saying no action should be taken, but it comes to the same thing. The perpetrators cannot be punished. They died in the planes they hijacked and are beyond our reach. It is not possible to fight a war (not even a losing war) without causing innocent people to suffer.

Wolfe's recommendations for immediate action: 1) declare war on nations that harbor terrorists; 2) arm the plane crews; 3) seal the borders; 4) return non-citizens to their homelands; 5) root out terrorist organizations everywhere; and 6) stop pressuring Israel to go soft on terrorists.

%%%

Here's Jim Jordan's response:

At 03:37 AM 12/1/2001 -0800, Alice wrote:
Wolfe's recommendations for immediate action: 1) declare war on nations that harbor terrorists; 2) arm the plane crews; 3) seal the borders; 4) return non-citizens to their homelands; 5) root out terrorist organizations everywhere; and 6) stop pressuring Israel to go soft on terrorists.

#s3. & 4. seem extreme. As for #1., I prefer the analogy of declaring war on the Barbary Pirates. Declare war on Al Qaeda and anyone similar, not on nations qua nations, unless things

change. That would cover #5. Iraq is a special case; I think Bush has done correctly to say let the UN inspectors back in now, or else.... I agree with #6, though I think Israel needs to correct some things in her behavior also.

The main thing, I think, is not to be naive about Islam in general and radical Islamism in particular. The American understanding of society is rooted in Christian notions, that God is One but also a Community, so that there are multiple "hierarchies" and "spheres" in life (church, state, family, media, business, etc.), and that love & reasonable persuasion is the best way to function in community. Islam is purely monotheistic, with one hierarchy from Allah to men to women & children & slaves, a hierarchy based solely on power and not moderated by love and persuasion. Though many Westerners are not Christian by personal commitment, they have been influenced by these Christian (and partly Athenian) ideas; and of course many people in Islam have been influenced by Western ideas. But pure Islam, and thus the Islamic militant revival, rejects those moderating ideas. What they understand is power, and it is important for the West (America in this case) to show Great Power, the "big footprint," in suppressing radical Islamism. Neither kindness nor reasonable persuasion are going to work on people who want to keep their women in total subjection -- and I think the "liberation" of women is one of the main, if not THE main, threat/s these particular people fear and loathe. (Consider the Taliban.)

FWIW

Jim Jordan

Michael Straight — 02 Jan 2002, 20:24 · follows John Barach

On Wed, 2 Jan 2002, Adam Stephanides wrote:

And Terry Brooks again! First Pullman praises him, then Wolfe criticizes his detractors. I've never read him, but can it be that his bad reputation is not entirely deserved?

No. Wolfe isn't saying Brooks is good. He's criticizing those who slam Brooks for being a Tolkien ripoff. Wolfe wants more Tolkien ripoffs and claims to be a Tolkien ripoff himself.

It's OK to slam Brooks for being bad, just don't slam him for trying to write the kind of books that Wolfe wants to read.

-Rostrum

James Jordan — 02 Jan 2002, 21:51 · follows Michael Straight

At 03:24 PM 1/2/2002 -0500, you wrote:

On Wed, 2 Jan 2002, Adam Stephanides wrote:

And Terry Brooks again! First Pullman praises him, then Wolfe criticizes his detractors. I've never read him, but can it be that his bad reputation is not entirely deserved?

No. Wolfe isn't saying Brooks is good. He's criticizing those who slam Brooks for being a Tolkien ripoff. Wolfe wants more Tolkien ripoffs and claims to be a Tolkien ripoff himself.

It's OK to slam Brooks for being bad, just don't slam him for trying to write the kind of books that Wolfe wants to read.

-Rostrum

Wolfe did have some nice things to say about Stephen Lawhead, to me, a few years ago. I imagine he considers Lawhead to be carrying the Tolkein torch pretty well. Never read Lawhead myself.

Nutria