

Severian of OED

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 15 Oct 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1174>

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.

m.driussi — 15 Oct 1998, 05:38

alga,

I am cheered to see you so happy, even though it wasn't me who started the ball rolling in this case--it was David Duffy who posted the OED "Apheta" and his closing comment that "Severian" was also in the OED.

Backgrounder for others: fact is, alga is credited with alerting me to the OED "Apheta" entry some several months ago, info which has been incorporated into the long heralded "Additions, Errata, &cetera: Volume III."

The intended point of my post, which I hesitate to belabor in sight of your evident happiness, was to say, well yes, "Severian" is in the OED, but how much can you do with the information given there?

It makes you happy, so that's an unexpected consequence of the better kind and we can let my question drop--unless you would care to amplify upon your enthusiasm, and that would be icing on the cake.

Deeper background: yep, I listed that info for the Severian entry of Lexicon Urthus (though I didn't tag it as being specifically from OED). And while I've always been fond of it, it still seems like a dead end or a short run from what at first seems like such a promising angle.

raster,

Right. Well I'm not saying that you or anybody has to believe what Robert Borski is posting. I'm saying that if there is an attempt at making the analogy "Order versus Chaos," with Borski here being put up as the posterboy for "Chaos," then I disagree--the more apt analogy is "Chaos versus Entropy."

Robert Borski is also asking, "Okay, so Clute can make these wild guesses, but I can't? Can anybody else but Clute do it--is anybody's reading valid?" Which in certain ways is a very interesting question (ignoring that Clute has built a reputation and career over the years doing the work that he does--still, he had to start somewhere, without a reputation).

A very interesting question, to which the most depressing answer is, "Clute who?"

Every reader, sitting in his/her solitary cell, re-reading Wolfe. That warm 'n' happy glow of being connected with every other solitary Wolfe reader, basking in that illusion. Illusion? Each is reading an unexamined personalized text. The differences between texts will only be revealed by sharing notes.

Why ruin the illusion(s)? The text exists only to entertain. Who would want to spoil it all, point

out how the movie sets are all just two-dimensional cut-outs?

If Robert Borski's wild ideas cause one to examine one's own text and post a report of it, then Entropy has been thwarted for the moment.

Then again, if a person =really= wants Entropy, then she/he probably left the mailing list already.

Is it (talking about Urth, or the Whorl, or any collected Wolfe fiction) too much gnawing over old bones? Do people hereabouts only yearn for the fresh text, the initial rush of discovery, the coastal cruising of new continents represented therein? If so, then maybe we should have a formal adjournment. That we leave this place, to reconvene only one month after the release of the first "Short Sun" book; or maybe that is too soon--how about waiting until the final "Short Sun" book comes out in paperback?

Anyway, while I've got you here--read any of the other more obscure Graves books? How about HERCULES, MY SHIPMATE and WATCH THE NORTHWIND RISE? The second title was evoked by Baird Searles in his review of CLAW (IASFM, Jun. 1981) as an example of a full play within the text. I managed to catch two worn paperbacks, but haven't read 'em yet.

=mantis=

Kieran Cleary — 15 Oct 1998, 10:58 · follows m.driussi

mantis,

one of the reasons I liked BotNS so much, I think, was the sense of a compressed, palimpsest-like complexity. By the time I had joined the list, I had read BotNS about four or five times, at which stage I still had questions, or at least questionable interpretations. For me, at this remove, the issues for which it's possible to frame rigorous and consensually reasonable accounts have largely been discussed in the list. We will, in the end, never know (by examination of the text) the purpose of the Witches' table, the explanation for Agilus' ribbon, etc. These loose ends are tantalising, and maybe aren't just decorative. However, I'm content to bask in the warm entropic fug of ambiguity, which I think is an essential and familiar ingredient of reading Wolfe. Literary Luddite? Maybe, but then I'm a reader, not a literary critic. Unlike most things, I don't want to take it apart so much that I can see how it works.

Kieran Cleary

North West Labs
Finisklin Industrial Estate
Sligo
Republic of Ireland

Tel. +353 71 69441
Fax. +353 71 69451
email: kieranwnn at tinet.ie