

Sev's name

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

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Alice Turner — 15 Oct 1998, 08:49

From mantis

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?

Oh, it does make me happy. What can I do with it? Hmm. Well, the first thing I can say with confidence is that is that, in a long book where virtually 100 percent of the human characters are named after either Christian saints or Roman pagans, to name the hero after a heretic, or indeed an entire sect of heretics, adds a note of playful cynicism. Wolfe has said (to Ratty, as I recall), Well, I am a Christian Catholic, but not the sort you think. (I paraphrase.) Well, yeah!! Dr. Talos's play, which is written along Manichean lines, might merit another reading with Sev's name in mind.

Simple reading: I am now going to write a sort of Christian fable, a Rapture and Rebirth imagining retold as sword-and-sorcery adventure with some Torah and pagan mythology tossed in; obviously this is not scripture, so I will make it clear that I am writing heresy. Of a sort.

-alga-

Alex David Groce — 15 Oct 1998, 09:46 · follows Alice Turner

I think it is suggestive, although I'm not sure it's as cynical as might appear. As to Wolfe's 'not the sort you think' comment, he also said something similar in an old interview with Larry McCaffrey (don't have it with me...) although there (and here) it looked like the implication was more that most people have no idea what being a Roman Catholic means (including most Catholics). I'm pretty sure Wolfe wouldn't consider himself a heretic (not that most heretics would...) and would, I suspect, fall into church line on defined doctrinal points (which leaves a lot of room for oddness--after all, I doubt the Church has made a proclamation one way or the other about the idea the Greek gods were real beings of some kind, for which Wolfe has expressed sympathy in the past). He's orthodox enough to be a huge Chesterton fan, anyway... And I would say that despite some terminological and mythological borrowings, the BOTNS is philosophically quite anti-Manichean. The Pancreator is fairly clearly fills both the 'God' and 'Creator' slots, and rather than despising the physical as inferior or absolutely corrupt, good old earthy Severian ends up taking off his boots because it's ALL Holy Ground. :)

Just my two cents--as to the whole mess of genealogical speculations I came back from break to find, I think it's fine to make them, but that most of them are fairly indefensible except as wild speculation unlikely to have been authorial intent or even the way most people would read things after a great deal of study (unlike the Dorcas, etc. hypothesis...)

On Oct 15, 8:49am, Alice Turner wrote:
Subject: (urth) Sev's name
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