

Sev, heresy and a bit of Agia

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

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1188>

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.

Alice Turner — 15 Oct 1998, 21:03

From AD Groce responding to alga:

I think it is suggestive, although I'm not sure it's as cynical as might appear.

Well, I did say "playfully cynical;" what if we change it to wry?

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...

But I didn't say that Wolfe was/is a heretic. I said that in his grand sword 'n sorcery revision of the New Testament (including Revelation) he made sure that the name of his hero, as opposed to the names of everyone else in the cast, is that of a heretic. (I use revision in the Harold Bloomian sense, which I consider spot on in this particular case, and I hope I won't have to explain that to anyone, though I dourly suppose that I will.) I *love* the fact (new for me) that it's a heretic name.

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. :)

But yes, with reservations about Erebus, Abaia & co., who are echoing the more dualist parts of Revelation. I said that Dr. Talos's play is Manichean. Which it certainly is--the gothic tradition to which Baldanders, Talos and all horror novelists belong is necessarily dualistic.

FWIW, my personal portrait of Agia and her agenda is the identical twin of mantis's, though perhaps mine wouldn't have been phrased so elegantly. Though the last time I was agreeable enough to agree with someone, I got flamed for it. Grrrrrrr.

-alga

Alex David Groce — 15 Oct 1998, 22:06 · follows Alice Turner

This is mostly elaborate agreement of a sort...

On Oct 15, 9:03pm, Alice Turner wrote:
Subject: (urth) Sev, heresy and a bit of Agia

From AD Groce responding to alga:

I think it is suggestive, although I'm not sure it's as cynical as might appear.

Well, I did say "playfully cynical;" what if we change it to wry?

I think wry is definitely the word with Wolfe.

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...

But I didn't say that Wolfe was/is a heretic. I said that in his grand sword 'n sorcery revision of the New Testament (including Revelation) he made sure that the name of his hero, as opposed to the names of everyone else in the cast, is that of a heretic. (I use revision in the Harold Bloomian sense, which I consider spot on in this particular case, and I hope I won't have to explain that to anyone, though I dourly suppose that I will.) I *love* the fact (new for me) that it's a heretic name.

Ah. Didn't think you were saying Wolfe was a heretic--I was just spinning off the remembered "not what you think it means" comment. Which I think Wolfe is actually using to suggest (I think he's said this, too) that most people who call themselves Christians probably don't know enough about Christianity to know if they're heretics or orthodox or not Christians or what-not, even in the vaguest sense. I think I was just leaping to clarify Wolfe's statement, which at first sounds rather hazy and (in the worst sense) mystical, when actually he's (I think) being insulting, which I prefer.

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. :)

But yes, with reservations about Erebus, Abaia & co., who are echoing the more dualist parts of Revelation. I said that Dr. Talos's play is Manichaeian. Which it certainly is--the gothic tradition to which Baldanders, Talos and all horror novelists belong is necessarily dualistic.

Agreed. Although, I can't place it now, but doesn't Sev. somewhere ponder whether in the end everyone is on the same side, even Abaia and Erebus, etc. Something rather along the lines of Wolfe's statement in the Jordan interview: "I think that Satan does what God wishes him to do; it is just that he doesn't want to. And I think the torturer is in the same position. He is frequently doing what God wants him to do but he is not trying to please God by doing it." I can't find the reference though--someone who's re-read the whole thing more recently want to try? Come to think of it, doesn't Silk say something like it. As to Talos' play, it's very Manichaeian at

heart--and Wolfe borrows a lot of things from various Gnostics here and there (since he borrows from just about anyone who's ever come up with an interesting mythology...)

FWIW, my personal portrait of Agia and her agenda is the identical twin of mantis's, though perhaps mine wouldn't have been phrased so elegantly. Though the last time I was agreeable enough to agree with someone, I got flamed for it. Grrrrrrr.

-alga