

The Ghod and his Typo

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 18 Dec 1999

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 18 Dec 1999, 16:58

William Ansley wrote:

Surely you can't believe that the fact that the "enchanted" sword in _The God and His Man_ is referred to as "Master" instead of "Maser" the first two times it is mentioned is anything but a (particularly annoying) typo.

Step one: even typos have entries, if only to note that they are typos ("Thadelaeus and Thalelaeus" in AE&2). Step two: while I agree that a typo is involved, unlike your(100-percent)self I'm only ninety-percent certain this is the case (that is, both Master and Maser might be right), and even granting a typo exists, I'm not entirely certain which one is correct.

(Actually, the reasoning probably goes the other way: if I =could= say that one of the two was definitely wrong, then I would be 100% certain that there was a typo. Why should I believe Master at all? Well, as you note, it is used twice in a row, the first and second times: as it reads, "Maser" is the one first suspected as typo. Also, that the sword is named Master feeds into my Elric sense of the story: it seems like the god really does want the sword to master the man, judging by the endgame; yet the moment the man is his own agent, away from the god, the magical master becomes a mere techno-tool. I hope we can at least agree that "master/servant" is a large part of what the story is about? Finally, I'm trying to remember the important case where a seeming typo in a Wolfe work was actually a very important detail of truth, but in my flu-addled week-weakened state [which may ultimately be the source of all my confusion], all I can think of are the real typos: the ones in EMPIRES OF FOLIAGE AND FLOWER, the ones in the Easton Press Edition of SHADOW, the snakes eating hands instead of heads, and so on.)

Further inquiry into the typo question might be rewarded by examining the magazine version--fwiw, I checked both the hardcover and the paperback of ES.

But yes, I do know what a maser is (thanks for spelling it out for others who might not); and yes, I also made the azoth connection; and again, azoth is a dingus of the Whorl rather than Urth, which sure is odd.

Not that anyone would be expected to know all this--I hadn't elaborated.

While Wolfe's work often has a positive attitude toward religion, we all know there are cases much more sinister: "Alien Stones," maybe "Westwind," maybe "Eyeflash Miracles," etc. "The God and His Man" would seem to be in this group. ("Use of a German word" is also a trait of "Silhouette"; factoids-R-us.)

In relating "The God and His Man" to TBOTNS, the closest I can get is the Temptation of Severian by Typhon. Which is dead-on-target--it is just such a small piece of the big picture that it seems odd to use it as an overture for the whole.

=mantis=