

John Crowley heroic template

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 28 Jun 2000

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 28 Jun 2000, 13:22

Alga wrote:

They are not poles; they are complementary. Smoky is terribly important; he is chosen (though he is far too modest to envision himself this way). Without him, the Tale could not be told. Look, this is a trope of Crowley's: The ordinary decent man finds himself in extraordinary circumstances, and, without believing at all in the situation which others seem to think merits action, agrees to do what is asked of him, to do his duty. It is the existential situation in a fairytale setting. Not only Smoky, but Rush who Speaks (from ES) and Pierce Moffit (from the Aegypt series) are heroes of this sort, and I think that Loren Casaubon from Beasts started out this way, though he sort of dribbled off (like the book). But to reiterate, JCs guys do their damn duty. That is their task, their quest, and because they take up that burden, willingly or not (Smoky is willing), the world whirrs.

Not that this will change alga's mind, but I'll list a few apparent contradictions or exceptions. SPOILERS for JC fiction to follow.

THE DEEP: the Visitor does not do his duty. IIRC, once he finally figures out what his duty is, he decides to personally question his maker (rather than going back and doing his duty post haste). Everybody else is busy looking out for "number one," except for the Just--aye, there's your duty.

BEASTS: a case might be made that many of the characters do not want to be manipulated by one power, but don't mind being manipulated by another power, or they want to do the manipulating themselves (Sten, maybe; Reynard definitely). Difficult to define "duty" in this case, although an easy answer would be "doing whatever Reynard wants you to do." (Rather like being one of the Just.)

ENGINE SUMMER: Rush-as-we-know-him does not do his duty, rather, he is like a rape victim who has just been violated for the umpteenth time. Was it his "duty" to leave Little Belaire? It didn't seem like it: rather, he wanted to follow his wayward girlfriend, and nobody could (even try to?) talk him out of it. Was it his duty to become a saint? That makes duty sound like "fate" or "destiny"--and we don't know that he became a saint, anyway.

LITTLE, BIG: I won't argue here, since Smoky does due his duty, as you say. But I will argue again for the creepy side of the family's translation to the next world as being very much in the tradition of cult members doing their "duty" by drinking the cyanide-laced kool aid. There is a spooky/icy quality to the ending.

GREAT WORK OF TIME: here is a case where the hero (Denys) does his duty, and then comes to feel that the results are so horrible that he has to betray the organization and the Empire in order to undo the whole thing. (That whole "being one of the Just" thing again.)

AEGYPT: at some point in DAEMONOMANIA, Pierce has a very JC hero moment (which of course is true of all of the AEGYPT series) and thinks about how hard he has tried all his life to avoid all the powers that have tried to manipulate him . . . then again, without giving anything away, Pierce himself is seeming less like Smoky Barnable and more like George Mouse. Not to say anything against George Mouse! Everybody loves him! He is practically the co-star of LITTLE, BIG. Still, there is a difference. (If you know what I mean you are ahead of me. <g>)

=mantis=