

JC in the mantis universe

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 17 Aug 2000

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Alice Turner — 17 Aug 2000, 07:20

Mantis wrote:

While I recognize that I really should not even mention it, since clearly I am in a different universe than John Crowley and possibly everybody else, yet still, I keep coming back to this one tiny bit in the baffling interview of John Crowley:

It's a drawback since I'm very prolific and I don't need to do that

Now, "prolific" is not a word I would ever associate with John Crowley. I don't mean that in a mean-spirited way at all.

Because it seems so wildly at variance with my sense of things, at first snort I took it to be ironic (and the word "prolific" should therefore be in italics); but then I saw that it might be "cloaked irony," that is, Crowley is channeling Reynard the Fox (what, again?!) and telling outrageous tales with a straight face (to see how far he can go, or just to mess with people's minds, who can say?). But then I realized that he is most likely telling the simple truth.

I think I can enlarge on that. Remember that Crowley has a day job too. Unlike that of most novelists, it involves writing. He is a specialist in providing narrative to documentary films, a job that involves a good deal of analysis. He told me that he seems to hold a niche in working with women filmmakers, who are often working with minuscule budgets against great odds. In fact, the most touching and sweet and Smoky-esque thing he ever said to me (I don't have it on tape) was on the order of, "Sometimes I think the reason I was put on this earth is to be of aid to these women."

I think he really does mean that he writes easily. I asked him at one point if he considered the AEgypt series a sort of hobby, and he denied it. But, personally, I think it sort of is. It's disastrously uncommercial, it's taken more than 20 years of his life, parts of it (Pierce's childhood in Kentucky in L&S) are nearly straight autobiography and we may guess that some of the rest is too, though I don't know that JC would own up to it. (Tell me what you think, mantis, of what I suspect: that JC's little joke, having given Loren, who is based on T.H. White, his own appearance, he has then given Pierce Lancelot's appearance, from The Ill-Made Knight--much is made of how ungainly Pierce is.)

-alga