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The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 18 Apr 2001

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maa32 — 18 Apr 2001, 23:15

James Jordan wrote

The four main characters each have a besetting sin. These seem to link with four of the Seven Deadly Sins (Pride, Greed, Envy, Anger, Lust, Gluttony, Sloth).

Fat Candy - gluttony. That's a no-brainer. (Her name links to this also, of course.)

Ozzie (Osgood = Oz-Good) Barnes (the salesman) - lust. I think his marriage broke up because of unfaithfulness, though this is not stated.

Stubb (the detective) - pride. He thinks he can handle everything, and has a "little man complex" or "Napoleon complex." As a short man consumed by being short, he's a "stub."

Madame Serpentina - witchcraft, perhaps greed as lust for power (the sin of the Serpent, Satan). Also, as a gypsy pickpocket she's "greedy." (Note that her name originally was Marie, Mary, but that she has fallen from this "Christian" name into serving Satan as Madame Serpentina.)

Each is trapped by his/her sin just before being offered a new life.

children's book is that the protagonist is a eleven-year-old girl. In nearly every other way, this book is on an adult level.

As far as I remember from a Wolfe interview, I thought he identified Madame Serpentina as pride (she is a haughty wench) and Stubb as Envy. I think Wolfe waffled a little on identifying Stubb (little man complex seems like envy mixed with pride to me). (Is there a big difference in the Ziesing version of the text? I can't imagine editing a Wolfe work down by thousands of words. Who knows what subtle details were destroyed? Only Wolfe. Maybe not even him.) I readily agree with your analysis of the Wizard of Oz parallels. Marc Aramini

Michael Straight — 19 Apr 2001, 09:39 · follows maa32

On Wed, 18 Apr 2001, maa32 wrote:

As far as I remember from a Wolfe interview, I thought he identified Madame Serpentina as pride (she is a haughty wench) and Stubb as Envy. I think Wolfe waffled a little on identifying Stubb (little man complex seems like envy mixed with pride to me).

I think the key has to be each one's temptation scene. Stubb's seems to be appealing to his desire to be thought smart and essential for an important case (and appealing to the young woman), thus Pride (Envy involves resenting someone else who has what you don't). We don't see Serpentina's but it seems to have been about giving her a shot at real supernatural power which seems to fit best under Avarice (maybe "lust for power"? Or do the Seven Deadlies put that under Avarice and reserve Lust for sexual sins? Do all sins fit under one of the Seven?).

-Rostrum