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The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 20 Apr 2001

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maa32 — 20 Apr 2001, 07:08

Before, I 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).

to which rostrum replied:

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?).

Here is a quote from an online interview accessible through Paul Duggan's web sight.

"GW: I suppose yeah. Yes. Somewhat the same concern. I tried to give the four borders, I tried to give each sort of a besetting sin. Madame Serpentina, it's pride. Candy, it is gluttony. Stub, I forget now. Osgood Barnes, sexuality of course.

JJ: And you drew them somewhat from the _____

GW: Envy, envy I think is Stubbs. And I wasn't trying to write allegory. I wasn't saying he was a personification of envy. I wanted to show men and women who were actually beset by these sins. "

I don't mean to beat a dead horse, but once again we need to consider the position of authorial intent: fallacy or definitively influential in interpretation? Marc Aramini

James Jordan — 20 Apr 2001, 10:32 · follows maa32

At 07:08 AM 4/20/2001 -0700, you wrote:

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Gosh, and that was my interview, and I'd forgotten. Well, I'm all for authorial intent, though as you can see, Wolfe was a bit unsure in his memory. But since all these sins overlap one another, I can go either way. Serpentina certainly is proud and haughty, and pride is traditionally the sin of Satan, so her involvement with witchcraft makes sense. Stubb as envious is a bit harder for me to see, but Wolfe wasn't entirely sure.

JBJordan

Michael Straight — 20 Apr 2001, 11:13 · follows James Jordan

On Fri, 20 Apr 2001, maa32 wrote:
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I think that bit about personification is important. In real life, Envy and Pride and Lust and Avarice are often all interrelated, so any attempt to create a character beset by Envy is likely to involve the others as well.

So it's possible Wolfe was thinking of Envy for Stubb and Pride for Serpentina, but that he ended up writing scenes where we see more of Serpentina's Avarice (or whatever you call her desire for Free's power) and Stubb's Pride.

If you look at what the characters learn from their temptation scene, Serpentina is tempted with the offer of power, but she ends up humbled and gives that speech about how little humans deserve more power or longer life, thus it corrects her Pride. But I have a harder time seeing the Envy in Stubb's temptation.

-Rostrum