

# Digest urth.v031.n025

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 05 Jan 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2886>

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Alice K. Turner — 05 Jan 2002, 03:30

From: Michael Andre-Driussi <mantis at siriusfiction.com>

In June of last year I received a letter from Gene Wolfe. Mostly it was about many other things, but in the end he did mention that he was having difficulty with the company that was supposed to publish his Tolkien essay.

They wanted him to secure written permissions for =every= quote, including the personal letter from Tolkien to Gene Wolfe and the poem by Noyes (who died in 1958). (Those of us who have read the essay also would add Robert E. Howard, at least. There are a lot of quotes!) This seemed insane to Gene Wolfe, in the modern day where Harlan Ellison is trying so hard to stop people from web-publishing entire sf stories without permission from the sf author.

(Well those of us who have followed such things in US publishing can say, "Thank you, J.D. Salinger.")

In any event, Gene Wolfe wrote pretty unambiguously in the letter that the project was dead from his point of view. Non-compliance on his part.

And lo, the essay did not appear in the US book; but it did appear in a UK magazine.

So it seems to me that if there was any "rejection" involved with the Tolkien book, it was Gene Wolfe's rejection of the terms and subsequent withdrawal of the essay.

This excuse is pretty hard to swallow, though I have no doubt that Wolfe employed it. We're talking about quotations from Thoreau(!), Conrad Aiken, Robert Howard, Tolkien and Lewis. Perhaps it is true that the estates of the last two are difficult to deal with, but I would think "fair use" plus the fact that one quote is from a letter to the author would carry the day--these are not extensive quotes. I don't know about the publisher, but Karen Haber is not naive or a nitwit about publishing. There indeed seems to be some crankiness at work, but not necessarily from the publisher, no matter what Wolfe may have told you.

-a-

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 05 Jan 2002, 04:25 · follows Alice K. Turner

alga wrote:

This excuse is pretty hard to swallow, though I have no doubt that Wolfe employed it. We're talking about quotations from Thoreau(!), Conrad Aiken, Robert Howard, Tolkien and Lewis. Perhaps it is true that the estates of the last two are difficult to deal with, but I would think "fair use" plus the fact that one quote is from a letter to the author would carry the day--these are not extensive quotes. I don't know about the publisher, but Karen Haber is not naive or a nitwit about publishing. There indeed seems to be

some crankiness at work, but not necessarily from the publisher, no matter what Wolfe may have told you.

My recollection of the J.D. Salinger case was precisely that: the use of letters from Salinger to the author, to be used in a brand new book about Salinger. I could be wrong (perhaps the main point in that case was the use of the full letters).

In a later post I tried to point out that the practice of putting the burden of getting permissions on the author is commonplace, the norm, so let's dispense with that issue. I was not saying that the publisher was being unusual, if that is still not clear.

But while we are on the topic of crankiness . . .

=mantis=

Sirius Fiction

booklets on Gene Wolfe, John Crowley

<http://www.siriusfiction.com/>

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David Duffy — 05 Jan 2002, 12:32 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

..... I think you're putting too much emphasis on the libertarian elements in Wolfe's political thought (which are certainly present), at the expense of his call for submission to legitimate authority, which is just as important, if not more so.

I see the history of New Viron, incl Horn & Nettle's failure as farmers, and the rise of slavery, as an attack on certain libertarian fantasies that all will be well living the autonomous (anarchic) frontier life. (maybe not that different from Farnham's Freehold ;))

David.

| David Duffy. , - \_ \

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