

The Waif, A Traveler, and Shields of Mars

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 23 Feb 2002

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Nicholas Gevers — 23 Feb 2002, 09:46

Various notes about GW short stories:

I was asked for my comments on "The Waif"--well, this is what I said in the February LOCUS:

"...Decidedly more weighty is "The Waif" by Gene Wolfe, that author at his magnificent subtle best, a tale of superstition and religious repression in a rustic post-holocaust community. A young boy acquires a doppelganger from among a transcendent branch of humanity that might as well be the Fairy Folk; he is persecuted; and the final intersection of two worlds is deeply shocking, part of an acute critical take on faith that is doubly interesting coming from such a resolutely religious writer."

Wolfe has a new story in the anthology MARS PROBES (DAW, June, ed Pete Crowther.) Gene's own description:

The MARS PROBES story is "Shields of Mars."
It's about a human and an
alien who have grown up together and are the last
workers at an air plant in
a remote location that is about to be shut down.

And a final point: I've just read a little-known Wolfe story, "A Traveler in Desert Lands", which appeared in 2000 in a limited edition anthology of stories set in Clark Ashton Smith's Zothique. It's very good indeed, a sort of alternate take on the analeptic alzabo notion from NEW SUN. A wandering ne'er-do-well enters a necropolis inhabited by people who are either ghoulish or ghouls indeed, and becomes ensorcelled. The conclusion is shocking, very well executed. A question: does anyone know in what language "Mahes" might mean "golden lion"? And how it might pair with the Greek "Endymion"?

--Nick Gevers.

Jerry Friedman — 26 Feb 2002, 22:42 · follows Nicholas Gevers

--- Nicholas Gevers <vermouliau at yahoo.com> wrote:
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...

At first I didn't know what you meant by the critical take on faith, but you're thinking of Bin's trust in Ariael and the townspeople's beliefs about consorting with the Flying People, right? (And the teacher's explanation for why they hate the Flying People was so absurd that I didn't see how even the kids could believe it.) A reversal of the Long and Short Sun books, where respect for superior beings is a good idea, even if they call themselves gods. I saw it more as morality: Ariael uses Bin's best feelings against him. The way he played on Bin's emotions reminded of the way Krait played on Horn's, to somewhat different--even opposite--effect.

Did Ariael have any other purpose than to cause what he caused? Why would he want to do that? Just for fun?

"Bin" is presumably the future version of "Ben", but any takers for it also being an alteration of Ban Ban Ca-Caliban, to go with Ariael?

Jerry Friedman