

A Sad Loss

The Urth list — 5 messages, 5 voices, 15 Apr 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3152>

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 15 Apr 2002, 16:58

The dedication to THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS reads:

To Damon Knight, who
one well-remembered
June evening in 1966 grew me from a bean.

I have no idea what that means, but I know that if it
were not for Knight's ORBIT series or original anthologies, we might not have Gene Wolfe - we
might not, that is, have the Gene Wolfe we know & love; I am sure that his talent would have
blossomed somewhere, but it might not have been in the genre of SF/F. And, of course,

Let us then observe a moment of silence and, for those of us who do such things, prayer.

Damon Knight is dead.

--A Very Depressed Blattid

Tony Ellis — 18 Apr 2002, 10:16 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

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Hmm. There used to be some sort of in-joke in SF publishing circles that publishers (or editors?)
didn't discover their writers, but grew them from magic beans. Please don't ask me where I got
this from, because I've been racking my brains trying to remember ever since I saw your post. It
feels like I read it in an essay or a foreword somewhere, and I can conjure up almost the exact
sentence, but not the source.

On another level, if you're right about Number Five's family name being more than just a pun,
then it's hard not to also see this dedication as a joking comparison of the Knight-Wolfe
relationship to that of father and son in 5HC. After all, Maitre grows little Gene Wolfes from seed
too.

James Jordan — 18 Apr 2002, 13:43 · follows Tony Ellis

At 05:16 AM 4/18/2002, you wrote:

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I believe the root meaning is that early on Wolfe attended one or more of Knight's SF Writers Workshops.

Nutria

Adam Stephanides — 19 Apr 2002, 15:04 · follows James Jordan

on 4/15/02 11:58 AM, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes at ddanehy at siebel.com wrote:
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In Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series vol. 9, Wolfe writes:

"I sent him [Knight] a rather experimental story in which a series of reports by an astronaut and a series of letters from a knight on the medieval planet he was exploring ran in parallel columns--the left column being science fiction, the right fantasy. Knight liked the story but not its double-column format, and asked me to break it up into conventional skips from astronaut to alien and back to astronaut.

"I retitled it 'Trip Trap,' idiotically retyped it with the astronaut's reports, complete, follwed by the alien's letters, and returned it to Knight....

"Knight returned 'Trip Trap' marked to show the points at which he felt the switches from one letter to the other should be made. I spent a couple of hours trying to improve on them and found I could not.... I'm still questioned occasionally about that dedication; this is the event to which it refers."

Wolfe goes on to say that Knight "was the first--for a long time the only--editor who communicated with me. We are both difficult personalities, perhaps, and we have drifted far apart since _Orbit_ went under; but I will always be grateful to Knight for what he taught me, and still more for teaching me when no other editor thought it worthwhile."

--Adam

William Ansley — 19 Apr 2002, 16:05 · follows Adam Stephanides

Adam,

Thank you very much for solving the magic bean mystery. You have the thanks of a grateful discussion group.

As far as Wolfe having read Baum's Oz books as well as Ruth Plumley Thompson's, I am certain that he did. Quite a while ago, I posted a very long and roughly written series of messages analyzing Wolfe's novella "The Eyeflash Miracles" and I was able to find some pretty specific references to Baum's Oz books. Of course, I suppose this isn't definitive: Thompson and the other subsequent Oz authors reused characters and settings from Baum as well as inventing their own. I only re-read Baum's original 14 Oz books during my "Eyeflash" analysis. Now that I know he preferred the Thompson books, I'll have to try to find time to re-read those, as well.

William Ansley

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