

Undines AND The Skirmish AND Castlevew

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 20 May 2006

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Jack Redelfs — 20 May 2006, 02:18

Nicely put, and as I've speculated recently

(

<http://listserver.dreamhost.com/pipermail/urth-urth.net/2006-April/001892.html>

),

I believe a case can be made that the undines are actually serving the

Hierodules rather than the Megatherians.

You've made some insightful observations, here, but I have to disagree. I just finished reading Lictor (I believe this is my 4th or 5th ride on the magic carpet), and Severian, musing on his experience with the undines, refers to them as loathsome or monstrous. Severian seems to be a good judge of character (if not infallible), and I trust him on this. (For example, he never seemed comfortable with Talos and Baldanders, long before he learned the extent of their sinful nature.)

I found another interesting bit in this reading, on page 276 (the last). Severian and the island folk have just sacked the castle and Banished baldanders.

"So too, this lonely tower was to prove a gateway--the very threshold of the war, of which a single far-flung skirmish had taken place here."

An odd statement. How could this fight on the shore of lake Diuturna (momentous as it may have seemed to it's own participants) have anything to do with the great clash between the armies of Commonwealth and Ascia? In light of this question, one could easily parse the sentence metaphorically. One could infer that the storming of Baldy's castle was a small part of the war called War, the great conflict that never ends. But in another sense, this skirmish was indeed a part of the Commonwealth/Ascia struggle, which is actually a war between the Autarch and the Conciliator (whom we now know Severian to be) and Erebus and friends

(championed by Baldy). Once again, I'm struck by how Wolfe's writing is so layered and full of insights, real and inferred, both equally enthralling.

An another random note.

I just finished Castlevew, and I must say I was dissapointed. Wolfe captured my intellect, as always, but for the first time he failed to capture my heart. None of the huge cast of characters was truly sympathetic to me. Also, I was dissapointed at how Wolfe eluded to Arthurian legend (and older myths) without really invoking it's spirit. Oh well, who am I to complain if, out of the 18 or so Wolfe novels I've read and reread, one turns out to be a clunker.