

Wolfe being clear on 5HoC

The Urth list — 20 messages, 7 voices, 06 Sep 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4711>

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b sharp — 06 Sep 2006, 12:50

Sorry, this is a terrible post- off topic and redundant on a tired subject.

But in a perusal of Wolfe interviews I just found this excerpt from one with Larry McCaffrey in which Gene Wolfe is almost unbelievably clear and open about a point of previous contention in here. I couldn't resist posting it now rather than risk me forgetting about it:

LM: All this "showing" in "V.R.T." is made intriguingly ambiguous by the confusion about >who "Marsch" really is.

Wolfe: In the end, of course, it's important that the reader not be confused about this, although >part of the fun is supposed to be figuring out what's happened. I leave a number of clues as to >who the narrator actually is. For example, both V.R.T. and the narrator are shown to be very poor >shots, whereas Marsch is a very good shot, and there's other hints like that. If you hire a shape >changer as a guide, there's a definite possibility that he's going to change into your shape at some >point. Which is what happens.

To me this says Wolfe generally means for his puzzles to be solvable.

-bsharp

Tony Ellis — 06 Sep 2006, 21:40 · follows b sharp

bsharp wrote, quoting Wolfe:

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changer as a guide, there's a definite
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point. Which
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Heh, and to me this says that some of the people I've argued with about 5HC just haven't read the same book as me.

To be fair, it sometimes feels like cheating to bring an external Wolfe quote into an argument - which is why I always try to argue directly from the books - and on occasion it can open a whole can of worms. But this one really does seem unequivocal, so thanks for digging it up.

On another occasion, Wolfe has said that Marsch was replaced by one of the Shadow People. I *think* he meant "one of the Annese", and was accidentally transposing a memorable name for a less memorable one, because VRT exhibits all the characteristics of the abos and none of those of the Shadow People - but there you go: already I'm imposing my own preconceptions on an external Wolfe statement.

Daniel D Jones — 07 Sep 2006, 00:08 · in reply to Tony Ellis

On Wednesday 06 September 2006 17:40, Tony Ellis wrote:
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those of the Shadow People - but there you go: already I'm imposing my
own preconceptions on an external Wolfe statement.

Who do you think the Shadow People are? I took it that they were the abos in their natural state.

b sharp — 07 Sep 2006, 11:18 · follows Daniel D Jones

Tony Ellis writes:

To be fair, it sometimes feels like cheating to bring an external Wolfe
quote into an argument

I disagree because I consider everything in here, even the arguments, a collaboration working
toward a common goal, not competition. If you "win" with key information omitted, it isn't much
of a victory, and in fact a failure, IMHO. ;-).

Making sure the quote isn't taken out of context, that I can agree with. Perhaps a rule should be
that if you quote from an interview, the whole thing should be made available. I'll do that below,
for this one.

From the same Larry McCaffrey interview I found this answer to a previous
question about the possibility of having Wolfe's notes published someday:

LM: Once the scope of The Book of the New Sun became obvious, you must have
sat down at >some point and developed some kind of detailed outline.

Wolfe: Actually I never use an outline when I work. Even with something
like The Book of the >New Sun, where there's an elaborate structure, the
outline exists only in my head and not on >paper. The only exception to
that was with a book I did a while back called Free Live Free, in >which a
lot of the action took place in an old brick house on a city street. For
that book I had to >draw a floor plan of the two storys of the house
because otherwise I found myself getting tangled >up in such details as:
Could you see the street from this window?

The interview is from 1988, has some interesting background on Wolfe's life and family as well
as other topics. For those interested, here is a link to the whole thing:
<http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/interviews/wolfe46interview.htm>

-bsharp

Hmpf MacSlow — 07 Sep 2006, 18:59 · in reply to b sharp

I am very amused by Wolfe explaining how Severian was mainly born from his desire to finally have a character of his that people could do at masquerades:

"As I sat there being instructed I was sulking because no one had ever done one of my characters at a masquerade. It seemed as though I had done a lot of things that people could do at a masquerade; but when I started to think this over more carefully, I realized there were few, if any, characters who would fit in with what Sandra and the others were saying. That led me to start thinking about a character who would fit someone who would wear simple but dramatic clothes. And the very first thing that came to mind was a torturer: bare chest (everybody has a chest, all you have to do is take your shirt off), black trousers, black boots (you can get those anywhere), black cloak, a mask, and a sword! Here was an ideal, easy SF masquerade citizen."

(Totally unimportant in the grand scheme of things, I know, but... funny. To think that Severian sprung from such, errm, mundane concerns. Mundane? Well, okay, rather the opposite... but, you know what I mean. *g*)

Great interview. Thanks for the link.

Hmpf

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Tony Ellis — 07 Sep 2006, 21:42 · follows Hmpf MacSlow

Daniel D Jones wrote:

Who do you think the Shadow People are? I took it that they were the abos in their natural state.

I **think** the Shadow Children - who I might not have called Shadow People if I'd drunk slightly less wine last night - are the native creatures of St Anne, while the 'abos' are humans.

The reasons for this are hard to summarise, but: towards the end of 'A Story' The Old Wise One seems much clearer about who is who, and he says of his race "Now I am half a man, and know that we were always here... Listening without thought of our own to be men."

Sandwalker's people, he says, *came* to this world - an idea which is also alluded to in the other two novellas.

Tony Ellis — 07 Sep 2006, 22:37 · follows Tony Ellis

bsharp wrote, quoting me:

To be fair, it sometimes feels like cheating to bring an external Wolfe quote into an argument

I disagree because I consider everything in here, even the arguments, a collaboration working toward a common goal, not competition. If you "win" with key information omitted, it isn't much of a victory, and in fact a failure, IMHO. ;-).

Possibly I didn't explain myself very well. All I meant was that we should be able to solve the conventional mysteries of a Wolfe story from the story alone. What Wolfe says in an interview may be very illuminating, but if you have to *rely* on it to prove your theory about a story, then you've failed to understand that story. And if you don't have to rely on it, then it's not key information.

b sharp — 08 Sep 2006, 02:30 · follows Tony Ellis

Tony writes:

we should be able to solve the conventional mysteries of a Wolfe story from the story alone. What >Wolfe says in an interview may be very illuminating, but if you have to *rely* on it to prove your >theory about a story, then you've failed to understand that story. And if you don't have to rely on it, then it's not key information.

I spy a difference in perspective and I think I've bumped into this difference before (correct me if I'm wrong Tony). Perhaps it boils down to some combination of subjective and objective.

Some appreciators of art find the interaction between artist and audience to be a sacred thing. I can appreciate this perspective since I am more like that with music. I'm not highly interested in all the outside influences that might have inspired a musician (especially in jazz) to play a certain note at a certain time. The song is exactly as it is played, and will thus be enjoyed or not by me. External context is not so important.

With literature, for me, it is different. Words, unlike notes, are judgeable. I feel comfortable being critical, saying "Wolfe made this story too ambiguous with the text alone." I need to know Wolfe's background, influences, thinking patterns to feel I might grasp his intended meaning. In fact, with Wolfe I also need the help of other readers to grasp it. For me, with Wolfe, all the extra stuff is "key information". Essential. I could even say that someone who ignores outside evidence or over-elevates the basic text fails to understand the story.

But I can respect anyone who prefers the sanctity of the words and the sacred bond that forms between reader and author when someone reads a story.

Who understands a cat better, a scientist who has dissected every square millimeter and done exhaustive biochemical and neurological testing....or...the long time owner of a cat?

-bsharp

Tony Ellis — 10 Sep 2006, 00:22 · follows b sharp

bsharp wrote:

But I can respect anyone who prefers the sanctity of the words
and the sacred bond that forms between reader and author when
someone reads a story.

I think you're reading too much into what I've said. I don't believe in 'the sanctity of the words', or any sacred bond between reader and author.

You seem to be talking primarily about understanding Wolfe's fiction in the artistic sense - what the stories *mean*, and in that respect I have no problem with looking outside the stories themselves. My favourite long poem in the world is Basil Bunting's autobiographical Briggflatts, and I know that reading about the poet's life gave me an invaluable insight into it.

But, Wolfe isn't just writing works of art. He's also writing stories with lots of mysteries and puzzles in them, which we are intended to solve, and a lot of our time on the list is spent trying to do so. And in this case I do believe that our solutions to these puzzles should come from the story itself. Not because the words are in some way sanctified, but simply because that's where Wolfe has put the clues.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 10 Sep 2006, 01:32 · in reply to Tony Ellis

Adding onto what Tony says:

I don't believe that the words are "sacred" or anything. A text is a made thing. But I also quite firmly believe that a text is what it is, rather than what its writer may have wanted it to be, or indeed may believe it to be. Indeed, my own experience with texts I have written have shown me that the writer may be quite unaware of what a text actually is. The best story I've published to date concealed a religious message, almost an allegory, of which I had no inkling when I wrote it but which was so painfully obvious when a reader pointed it out to me ... well, if someone else had written it, I wouldn't believe their claims that it was not intentional. But there you are: the text is what it is.

To that extent, then, while I don't suggest that the writer's external comments be utterly disregarded in interpreting a text, those comments are of tertiary value at best. The primary fact, we interpret, is the text, an independent object sent into the world by its writer, and the secondary means by which we interpret it is by observing our encounters with the text as _readers_. The writer's intentions must yield pride of place to both the text as a fact and the encounter with the text as experiential data.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

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I've got a piece of braaaaain lodge in me heeead!!!

b sharp — 10 Sep 2006, 04:44 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

I can't say I strongly disagree with what Dan'l and Tony recently posted but for the sake of argument I'll address a couple things (at the risk of straying too far from Wolfe, sorry Ranjit!;-))

Dan'l writes:

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be. Indeed, my own experience with texts I have written have shown >me that the writer may be quite unaware of what a text actually is.

This recognizes that an author may include unintended meanings in writing text but ignores that the meaning must be found by a reader. Each individual reader will find unique meaning in the text. Several individuals or even most of them might agree on that meaning but to say "text is what it is" seems to suggest there is some universal truth to be found in ink dots. I hold that text and in fact all art means nothing outside the synergy of understanding between artist and each individual audience member. Take that away and you have only processed wood pulp, colored liquids, sound waves, carved minerals, etc. Text is what the author and the readers make it, right?

Tony writes:

But, Wolfe isn't just writing works of art. He's also writing stories with lots of mysteries and puzzles >in them, which we are intended to solve, and a lot of our time on the list is spent trying to do so. >And in this case I do believe that our solutions to these puzzles should come from the story itself. >Not because the words are in some way sanctified, but simply because that's where Wolfe has put >the clues.

I agree about the puzzles, but are you suggesting the puzzles are completely internal? That an extremely intelligent reader could read BotNS as a first book and solve all the mysteries with no other sources? That there is no need of familiarity with the Bible, with Greek mythology, with Campbell's Hero With A Thousand Faces, etc. etc. I'm guessing not....

Lacking "at a glance" brilliance, I admit to having a bulldog mentality when it comes to puzzles. I'm generally unhappy with loose ends and ambiguity (no I do NOT like Waiting for Godot, :-))). So I draw no lines on what is fair game in solving these puzzles, including other people's ideas and Gene Wolfe interviews. If a clever interviewer gets him to spill too many beans, well...only fair since for over 30 years Gene Wolfe has clearly had the upper hand.

-bsharp

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 10 Sep 2006, 06:25 · in reply to b sharp

On 9/9/06, b sharp <bsharporflat at hotmail.com> wrote:
I can't say I strongly disagree with what Dan'l and Tony recently posted but for the sake of argument I'll address a couple things (at the risk of straying too far from Wolfe, sorry Ranjit!;-))

I hope Ranjit (and others) will bear with this discussion -- the subject of "how to interpret" is certainly germane to the task of interpreting.

This recognizes that an author may include unintended meanings in writing text but ignores that the meaning must be found by a reader.

Ummm, not so much. I did in fact speak of the importance of the encounter of the reader with the text. I'm writing quickly and informally; in point of fact, if I wanted to talk about "meaning" formally, I could _only_ talk about it in terms of what the reader discovers (or creates by interacting with the text), _not_ what the writer "intended." Formally, I find the writer's intentions to be of almost no relevance to the generation of meaning when a reader decodes a text; the emphasis on the writers' intentions is a holdover from a Biblical hermeneutics based on the bad theological idea of "divine dictation," the idea that the Bible was actually dictated word-for-word by the Holy Spirit.

But meaning is not so much "found" by the reader as _made_ by the reader interacting with the text. Meaning (a meaning, not "the" meaning) is created anew in the mind of each reader, by the reader's process of interpreting. The text guides the process, but the energy is provided by the reader: much as the tracks guide the train but the engine provides the motive energy.

To clarify: by "text" I mean not only the written word but any object subjected to interpretation. As an interesting gedanken- experiment, suppose you read a story and are moved by it, find it filled with fascinating ideas, interesting characters, and exciting action. No author's name is attached to the text. You do a bit of research, because you'd like to know more, possibly read more by the same writer.

What does it mean to you if you find out that the text was...

...written by an established writer?

...written by a condemned war criminal?

...written by a schizophrenic whose contact with consensus reality approaches nil?

...written by a chimpanzee banging keys at random?

...written by a computer program, which analyzed other texts syntactically and structurally, but not semantically, and produced a new text based on that analysis?

...written by a computer program that claims to have achieved independent sentience?

...found carved in a rock that had been buried a million years or more?

To me, as far as interpreting the text, the answer to any or all of these questions is (or should be): _next to nothing_.

In reality, it isn't. In reality, I know that some interpretations of a Lupine text are more valid than others because I know (or think I do) something of Wolfe's actual beliefs and aesthetics. But his intentions about a particular text? No, not really; they are, at best, a chimera.

Incidentally, I love "Waiting for Godot," but I think it's rarely performed well or with understanding. Done right, it's an uproariously _funny_ play.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

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Daniel D Jones — 10 Sep 2006, 13:12 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Saturday 09 September 2006 21:32, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:
Adding onto what Tony says:

I don't believe that the words are "sacred" or anything. A text is a made thing. But I also quite firmly believe that a text is what it is, rather than what its writer may have wanted it to be, or indeed may believe it to be. Indeed, my own experience with texts I have written have shown me that the writer may be quite unaware of what a text actually is. The best story I've published to date concealed a religious message, almost an allegory, of which I

had no inkling when I wrote it but which was so painfully obvious when a reader pointed it out to me ... well, if someone else had written it, I wouldn't believe their claims that it was not intentional. But there you are: the text is what it is.

To that extent, then, while I don't suggest that the writer's external comments be utterly disregarded in interpreting a text, those comments are of tertiary value at best. The primary fact, we interpret, is the text, an independent object sent into the world by its writer, and the secondary means by which we interpret it is by observing our encounters with the text as _readers_. The writer's intentions must yield pride of place to both the text as a fact and the encounter with the text as experiential data.

I largely agree with you on this, but I would add that one needs to distinguish between the symbolism/message of a text, and the actual events the text describes. What started this exchange of observations, as the subject still shows, was Wolfe's comments on the issue of whether or not there is an exchange of narrators in V.R.T. In this case, I'd say that Wolfe's comments are of primary rather than tertiary value. The situation would be quite different if he commented on, for example, what the book says about a societies responsibilities in how they treat less advanced cultures or species with which they interact. I'd then agree with your position that his comments are not definitive but merely suggestive at best.

There are many of Wolfe's works where a primary challenge is to determine exactly what occurred. If Wolfe can not answer with authority as to the actual events of the story he wrote, then certainly no one else can either and discussing or trying to solve the puzzles degenerates into instances of navel gazing.

Tony Ellis — 10 Sep 2006, 15:29 · follows Daniel D Jones

bsharp wrote:

I agree about the puzzles, but are you suggesting the puzzles are completely internal? That an extremely intelligent reader could read BotNS as a first book and solve all the mysteries with no other sources?

Completely internal? Oh no, I think that Wolfe expects his reader to be far too well-read for that to ever be the case.

What I **don't** think, on the other hand, is that Wolfe wrote The Fifth Head of Cerberus thinking "I don't need to make it clear that Victor is a shapeshifter, because I'm going to tell everyone that in an interview in 15 years time."

I don't think we're supposed to solve the mysteries Wolfe sets up by going through his interviews any more than we're supposed to solve them by going through his dustbins. And so to do so, for me, 'sometimes feels like cheating'. It's a personal foible, not a proscription. :-)

Dan'I wrote:

Incidentally, I love "Waiting for Godot," but I think it's rarely performed well or with understanding. Done right, it's an uproariously _funny_ play.

You should come here for a visit. :-) Sir Peter Hall's 50th anniversary production of Waiting for Godot was so popular last year that it has been revived for another tour, and I can vouch for the

comedy, the pathos, and the human warmth. (Sir Peter Hall directed the first ever English language production - and the world has never been quite the same since.)

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 10 Sep 2006, 19:19 · in reply to Daniel D Jones

On 9/10/06, Daniel D Jones <ddjones at riddlemaster.org> wrote:
I largely agree with you on this, but I would add that one needs to distinguish between the symbolism/message of a text, and the actual events the text describes.

An interesting but ambiguous point.

Delany writes, somewhere, of a passage in one of his books that begins: "The city, now deserted..." Due to a typo (not caught by the dyslexic Mr Delany), in the first several editions of the book the phrase read: "The city, not deserted..." It was called to his attention by a student writing a thesis on the paper, whose argument depended heavily upon the as-printed reading. That the city (which certainly appears to be deserted) is "not" deserted formed the root of a strong argument for a particular interpretation of the text.

Delany's reaction was to congratulate this person on the acuity of his reading, agree with his interpretation ... and correct the typo in future editions.

Where does the author's intention lie? Delany is, to be sure, an oddly modest man, but that he accepts the interpretation as completely valid for the book as printed illustrates something that seems obvious to me: once the book is out of the writer's hands, interpretation is solely the responsibility of the reader.

To put it in a slightly different light, have you read Norman Spinrad's THE IRON DREAM? If not, you probably should; if so, you'll understand what I mean when I say that, after reading it, you can never read a generic swords'n'sorcery novel in quite the same way as before: you'll perceive in it entire classes of meanings that the author almost certainly did not intend, and that, just as almost-certainly, are really and truly and clearly present in the texts. (THE IRON DREAM is one of the most brilliantly subversive books I've ever read...) One odd consequence is that the (almost any) generic S&S novel is a significantly different object of interpretation in the hands of a reader who has read the Spinrad, from what it is in the hands of one who has not: yet the words on the paper have not changed, and certainly the author's intentions (assuming the author had any intentions beyond three-cents-a-word) have not...

What started this exchange of observations, as the subject still shows, was Wolfe's comments on the issue of whether or not there is an exchange of narrators in V.R.T. In this case, I'd say that Wolfe's comments are of primary rather than tertiary value.

I'll grant you secondary. If Wolfe says that there is a change of narrators, and there's no evidence otherwise in the text, I'll grant that Wolfe has privileged knowledge that can be usefully applied here. If there's significant evidence in the text that militates against Wolfe's interpretation, I'll argue happily that he is not privileged as over against the text.

If a writer claims that "What I meant to say is..." then my question is, inevitably, "Then why didn't you say that?"

There are many of Wolfe's works where a primary challenge is to determine exactly what occurred. If Wolfe can not answer with authority as to the actual events of the story he wrote, then certainly no one else can either

I'm comfortable with that. Ambiguity is part of life. Hell, we can't say for certain whether one man or several committed a murder in public, in front of thousands of witnesses, in Dallas in 1963. "What happened?" is never simple, and there may be no way to achieve a clear answer. I believe Wolfe's texts reflect this aspect of reality, and even if he has a clear idea of what happened, his writing is so "realistic" in this sense that it may well be that there is no authoritative solution to be found in the text. If so, then that won't be changed by auctorial fiat after the fact.

and discussing or trying to solve the puzzles degenerates into instances of navel gazing.

Trying to solve, perhaps; but perhaps the point of the puzzle is not the solution but the process of trying to solve it. Like a Rubik's cube: when you solve it, what have you got? A cube. The solution matters not at all; the process of solving (or trying to solve) is all.

If you have a crossword puzzle in front of you, and the answer is in the back of the magazine, do you immediately look at the answer? I think not; the answer is itself meaningless. It is the process of solving that matters.

I'm not suggesting that -- if Wolfe's cunning ambiguities _do_ have solutions -- the solutions do not matter. I am, however, suggesting that if they do, the value of the solutions is to a significant extent to be derived from the process of seeking them, and that a shortcut like consulting the author deprives the solution of some of its value. When stumped, an external clue from the author may help set us on the right path, but I won't accept the external statement as "true" until it's verified from _within_ the text.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

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Nathan Spears — 21 Sep 2006, 21:55 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

I think this sort of interpretation is diversionary at best. If what an author achieves is greater (or more significant) than what he intended, then his skill as an author has failed him in some way. It may be interesting to look at what has "slipped out" but it would certainly not merit devoted re-reading and analysis, in my opinion. If the author's insight into his own work is less valuable than mine, then perhaps I should find someone else to read.

I do agree with your sentiment that the work ought to speak for itself; Wolfe also says as much in several places. His puzzles are clearer to him than to us, though, so I don't mind when he drops a hint.

I did enjoy your comments about the "sacred"; they brought to mind Severian's exposition on the nature of sanctity. If Wolfe is sacred because God created him (in His image), and Wolfe's urge to create gave us tBOtNS, doesn't that give it a secondhand sanctity?

----- Original Message -----

From: Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com>

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Sent: Saturday, September 9, 2006 8:32:41 PM

Subject: Re: (urth) Wolfe being clear on 5HoC

Adding onto what Tony says:

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a made thing. But I also quite firmly believe that a text is what it is, rather than what its writer may have wanted it to be, or indeed may believe it to be. Indeed, my own experience with texts I have written have shown me that the writer may be quite unaware of what a text actually is. The best story I've published to date concealed a religious message, almost an allegory, of which I had no inkling when I wrote it but which was so painfully obvious when a reader pointed it out to me ... well, if someone else had written it, I wouldn't believe their claims that it was not intentional. But there you are: the text is what it is.

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Adrian Robert — 21 Sep 2006, 23:10 · in reply to Nathan Spears

On Sep 21, 2006, at 5:55 PM, Nathan Spears wrote:

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I recommend reading an excellent essay by Carl Jung on just this matter, entitled "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry". It can be found in some volumes excerpting his collected works. He refutes this view on the basis of two ideas -- first, the writer is not operating in a vacuum, but is a conduit through which species- and culture-universal as well as individual experiences flow, and second, that what is accessible to conscious control and introspection can in no sense be said to make up the entire contribution to a creative work as complex as a poem, let alone a novel. There are just too many aspects, too many details, too many dimensions to suppose that the author has consciously exerted control over every one of them -- yet they are affected and determined nonetheless by the author (and that which has influenced him or her).

I find this an insightful way to look at many art forms. When you start thinking about works such as major films, for example, affected by many people, it leads to some interesting lines of thinking..

Nathan Spears — 21 Sep 2006, 23:46 · in reply to Adrian Robert

He refutes this view on the basis of two ideas -- first, the writer is not operating in a vacuum, but is a conduit through which species- and culture-universal as well as individual experiences flow, and second, that what is accessible to conscious control and introspection can in no sense be said to make up the entire contribution to a creative work as complex as a poem, let alone a novel. There are just too many aspects, too many details, too many dimensions to suppose that the author has consciously exerted control over every one of them -- yet they are affected and determined nonetheless by the author (and that which has influenced him or her).

I will look for the essay, but I can agree with this on the basis of what you have said already. What I was trying to say was that this shouldn't be the most interesting, dominating aspect of the work, and be pivotal to the interpretation and understanding of it. I can't shake the feeling that proponents of this type of analysis feel that all an author's skill and craft are the part of the iceberg above the water. Maybe that is true, but if I ever become convinced that it is so, I will give up reading and find something else to occupy my time.

For instance: humans tend to pair off, male with female. This is fundamental to understanding Wolfe - probably most literature, and most civilization. To an alien species of four sexes that can mate in any three-sex combination, that would be a crucial discovery that they would need to make before they could understand tBotNS. There are less obvious subconscious drives and issues pervading tBotNS, some of which bear discussion by humans. But if I thought that any of them were more relevant to understanding the work, or were more interesting, than the drives and issues that Wolfe intended to write about, I would think that Wolfe was really not that great of an author and I would read something else.

Adrian Robert — 22 Sep 2006, 12:41 · in reply to Nathan Spears

On Sep 21, 2006, at 7:46 PM, Nathan Spears wrote:

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Well, it's certainly everyone's right to appreciate art however they would like to appreciate it. ;) And I used to hold this kind of "art is communication" (or at least "conscious conveyance") view myself. However, you give something up by holding to it, which is precisely the ability to pick up on the full, broad and various range of currents of experience and interpretation that are channeled through every artist. Some of these currents may by nature never find their way into conscious awareness during a particular creative process (or maybe ANY creative process), but nonetheless end up being reflected very powerfully in the result.

Putting preferential weight on the products of the author's conscious efforts in some sense implies that the reader / appreciator of an art work is less than 50% of the equation. There IS asymmetry in the relation, but accepting a subconscious role in creation means the degree to which various themes or contents resonate with the reader -- and the interpretations they build around them -- deserve to be on equal footing with the author's intent.

But I'm not explaining myself very well -- whereas Jung had a different order of communicative skill. I'll be curious to hear, if you do read the essay, how it affects your thinking..

Daniel D Jones — 22 Sep 2006, 22:13 · in reply to Adrian Robert

On Friday 22 September 2006 08:41, Adrian Robert wrote:

On Sep 21, 2006, at 7:46 PM, Nathan Spears wrote:

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Which brings us back full circle to the point I originally made - that there is a significant difference in relying on the author as an authority when one is trying to appreciate art and when one is trying to solve a puzzle as to the actual events that occur in the story. Appreciating Wolfe as an artist is quite a different endeavor from solving Wolfe's puzzle. If Wolfe makes some sort of definitive statement about the artistic value of one of his works, then I'm not going to

ignore him but I'm not going to consider the matter closed either. However, when Wolfe says that the author of V.R.T was indeed replaced by a shapeshifter, then I DO consider that matter closed.