

A very interesting interview indeed (Daniel D Jones)

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 10 Sep 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4721>

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Josh Young — 10 Sep 2006, 13:36

Today's Topics:

1. Re: A very interesting interview indeed (Daniel D Jones)
2. Re: Close Reading: Torturer Chapter I (Robin Hankin)
3. Wolfe being clear on 5HoC (Tony Ellis)
4. Re: Wolfe being clear on 5HoC (Dan'I Danehy-Oakes)

Message: 1

Date: Sat, 9 Sep 2006 09:22:41 -0400

From: Daniel D Jones <ddjones at riddlemaster.org>

Subject: Re: (urth) A very interesting interview indeed

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

Message-ID: <200609090922.41575.ddjones at riddlemaster.org>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="utf-8"

On Friday 08 September 2006 07:04, thalassocrat at nym.hush.com wrote:

On Fri, 08 Sep 2006 05:36:38 +1000 Adam Thornton <adam at io.com>

wrote:

I was reading the recently-posted Larry McCaffery interview, in which the mystery of 5HC is "given away" (<http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/interviews/wolfe46interview.htm>)

There's the following quotation in it too:

"The fact that you stand there and let someone hit you in the face

doesn't do anything to eliminate violence (it may even contribute to further violence) ?which is one of the underlying themes in The Book of the New Sun."

That seems a very explicit repudiation of one of the more memorable passages in a book that's generally considered to be a pretty huge

influence on Wolfe's work generally and BotNS in particular.

The most striking manifestation of this to me is Sev's behavior when he's arrested in UOTNS. He messes up bunch of soldiers, and then he kills the prison governess almost immediately upon meeting her. If I were a Christian, I'd find those pretty disturbing events in Sev's "ministry".

I can never make up my mind whether (a) Wolfe thinks Jesus was a wuss & that Sev is showing how a non-wuss handles this kind of situation (b) it's another indication that the universe of New Sun isn't ours, in line with theories I've posted previously (c) Wolfe thinks the Bible got it wrong and that, in fact, Jesus went down fighting (d) some other damn thing.

I think seeing Sev as a direct parallel to Jesus is a mistake. Certainly, he is in some sense a Messiah figure but I think that's he's both more and less. More, in that there are a great many other themes and issues being addressed than solely a Messiah, and less in that Sev certainly isn't in any sense a perfect representative as Christ was supposed to be. If you're a Christian, you're supposed to use Christ's actions as a model on which to base your own. It's become a trite phrase but that's exactly what WWJD means. I don't think Wolfe ever intended anyone to ask WWSD, so trying to draw critiques of Christ's actions from Sev's actions is, I think, missing the mark.

I read an interview with Wolfe somewhere in which he stated that Sev is not supposed to be a Christ-figure, just a Christian-figure. There are definite Messianic parallels, yes, but according to Christian theology, a Christian is supposed to be a mini-Messiah, more or less. Working for someone else (Yesod, in Sev's case) for a higher good. However, a keep difference between Christians and Christ is that Christians mess up constantly. Which Sev does. He's not initially an admirable man; leaving aside Christian injunctions against (consensual) adultery, he rapes Jolenta, kills, tortures, lies... It's not until after his hierophany in book 4 that anything even close to something admirable begins to emerge.

Besides which, characters with faults are -far- more interesting than without. Christian or not, I'd be bored out of my mind reading 1000+ pages of a direct parallel to Christ. Faultless characters are just too unbelievable.

Although, interestingly.... Sev and Silk are sort of mirror opposites of each other. Sev starts off as someone without much admirability, and becomes more admirable as the time progresses, and Silk starts off as admirable and regresses. Although perhaps his mistakes in BotSS are more an influence of Horn's. Hmm. I'm going to have to reread.[/thinking out loud]

~Joshua Young

"Fear is the mind killer" - Frank Herbert's Dune

"If you want to get warm, you must stand near the fire. If you want to be wet, you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to... the thing that has them. They are not the sort of prize that God....[would].... just hand out to anyone." - CS Lewis, Mere Christianity

"Mortal love is merely our introduction to the immortal" - Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman's The Seventh Gate