

the elephant in the room

The Urth list — 14 messages, 9 voices, 27 Jun 2007

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don doggett — 27 Jun 2007, 18:35

So . . .

Why has there not been any full blooded conversation about Soldier of Sidon on the list? It's a "bigger" book than Wizard Knight in terms of anticipation, but it just sort of fizzled on the list. For myself, I just don't have the time anymore to do the digging I need to do to even create a fringe theory about it. But what about everyone else? Did you hate it? Did it seem too straightforward to talk about? Or is it just blah? I'm just curious, and no answer I suppose is an answer too. My biggest criticism is that I have absolutely no idea what happened to Latro to get him imprisoned in Nubia and really no clue as to what is going on during that entire sequence. To the point that I didn't care to find out. Other than that, I really enjoyed it.

Don

The Evangelists: a Lesser Apocrypha

<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=178109961>

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 27 Jun 2007, 18:49 · in reply to don doggett

Don,

Some personal thoughts on "Soldier of Sidon."

1. I find the "Soldier" books the hardest to read of all Wolfe's work. I don't know why this should be. Part of it, I suspect, is that the artificiality of it is right on the surface; the conceit of Latro's memory loss, while poignant and meaningful, also creates a surface reason for Wolfe's usual lacunae, making it harder to look for meaning in them (Latro isn't suppressing unpleasant facts, he just doesn't know a lot of them), while at the same time almost forcing a degree of repetition that is totally un-Lupine. Because of this, the first two are my least reread Wolfe novels, and I chose to reread them prior to reading "Sidon," and so only got to "Sidon" this past month.

2. There was some discussion of "Sidon" after it came out. I've saved it unread, and will get around to reading it soon. Maybe I'll respond to some of it.

3. In many ways, I found "Sidon" an easier read than its predecessors. Still quite difficult (something about Latro's style just does *not* fit well into my parser) but easier: possibly because I know Egyptian culture/history better than Greek and had less trouble understanding

what was going on.

4. But I just don't find a great deal of meaning in these books. Partly, I'm sure, because I struggle just to read them, and because I've reread them so little; but partly because so much *is* on the surface. There seems to be very little "hidden stuff" going on, other than whatever is going on with the gods of various lands bickering with each other. But once you take them as literally existing beings, well, that's what gods of that sort *do*.

On 6/27/07, don doggett <kingwukong at yahoo.com> wrote:
So . . .

Why has there not been any full blooded conversation about Soldier of Sidon on the list? It's a "bigger" book than Wizard Knight in terms of anticipation, but it just sort of fizzled on the list. For myself, I just don't have the time anymore to do the digging I need to do to even create a fringe theory about it. But what about everyone else? Did you hate it? Did it seem too straightforward to talk about? Or is it just blah? I'm just curious, and no answer I suppose is an answer too. My biggest criticism is that I have absolutely no idea what happened to Latro to get him imprisoned in Nubia and really no clue as to what is going on during that entire sequence. To the point that I didn't care to find out. Other than that, I really enjoyed it.

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Daniel D Jones — 27 Jun 2007, 21:53 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On Wednesday 27 June 2007 14:49, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:

1. I find the "Soldier" books the hardest to read of all Wolfe's work. I don't know why this should be. Part of it, I suspect, is that the artificiality of it is right on the surface; the conceit of Latro's memory loss, while poignant and meaningful, also creates a surface reason for Wolfe's usual lacunae, making it harder to look for meaning in them (Latro isn't suppressing unpleasant facts, he just doesn't know a lot of them), while at the same time almost forcing a degree of repetition that is totally un-Lupine. Because of this, the first two are my least reread Wolfe novels, and I chose to reread them prior to reading "Sidon," and so only got to "Sidon" this past month.

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because I've reread them so little; but partly because so much *is* on the surface. There seems to be very little "hidden stuff" going on, other than whatever is going on with the gods of various lands bickering with each other. But once you take them as literally existing beings, well, that's what gods of that sort *do*.

Interesting. I think the Soldier series are some of the easiest to read. In part, that's because I agree with point 4 - they also seem the shallowest of Wolfe's books. Some of the action is confusing, largely due to Latro's memory issues, but for the most part the books roll along with plenty of action and intrigue. Unlike much of Wolfe's stuff, they don't seem like they should have a gold stamp on the cover proclaiming "This Is Literature!" And I don't mean to imply that Wolfe is pretentious - I don't think that he is. But his stuff is deep, and the Soldier books, while they have plenty of depth to the story, seem more like they're "just" stories to be read primarily for pleasure.

Matthew Groves — 28 Jun 2007, 01:03 · follows Daniel D Jones

The whole Soldier series is opaque to me: I enjoy the surface as I enjoy all Wolfe's writing, but I can tell there is something underneath that I can't quite perceive. Wolfe subjects the reader to something of Latro's own predicament by overlaying the events with the "mist" of his fictional translation -- e.g., the place names and gods are unfamiliar, and Wolfe suggests in the foreword that the punctuation and even the words themselves can't be completely trusted.

Grrr! Throw a dog a bone, will ya? I can figure out the place names well enough, but if only the gods to whom Latro speaks would occasionally mention in passing the name by which they might be recognized or googled by a 21st-century reader whose public school education included not one single lesson in the Classics, it would make progress ever so much smoother for me.

David Duffy — 28 Jun 2007, 02:40 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On 6/27/07, don doggett <kingwukong at yahoo.com> wrote:
So . . .

Why has there not been any full blooded conversation about Soldier of Sidon on the list? It's a "bigger" book than Wizard Knight in terms of anticipation, but it just sort of fizzled on the list. For myself, I just don't have the time anymore to do the digging I need to do to even create a fringe theory about it.

and Dan'l Danehy-Oakes answered:

There seems to be very little "hidden stuff" going on, other than whatever is going on with the gods of various lands bickering with each other. But once you take them as literally existing beings, well, that's what gods of that sort *do*.

Well, my question about bickering of the gods is, where is the God of the Israelites? We seem to have carefully circled around there. I'm a bit vague as to what is going on Biblically around this period. I was wondering about Lions and B. as Solomon and Sheba but a few hundred years out ;)

David Duffy.

| David Duffy (MBBS PhD) ,_-|\n
| email: davidD at qimr.edu.au ph: INT+61+7+3362-0217 fax: -0101 / *

Jon Capps — 28 Jun 2007, 02:53 · in reply to David Duffy

David Duffy wrote:

Well, my question about bickering of the gods is, where is the God of the Israelites? We seem to have carefully circled around there. I'm a bit vague as to what is going on Biblically around this period. I was wondering about Lions and B. as Solomon and Sheba but a few hundred years out ;)

At first I thought it might occur during the 400+ years between the Old and New Testaments, but the Battle of Plataea occurred in 479 BC and Malachi was written about 435 BC, so I don't know.

jon

Bob Miller — 28 Jun 2007, 11:02 · in reply to Matthew Groves

Bullfinch

21st-century reader whose public school education included not one single lesson in the Classics, it would make progress ever so much smoother for me.

Mo Holkar / UKG — 28 Jun 2007, 18:04 · in reply to Matthew Groves

At 02:03 28/06/2007, Matthew wrote:

I can figure out the place names well enough, but if only the gods to whom Latro speaks would occasionally mention in passing the name by which they might be recognized or googled by a 21st-century reader whose public school education included not one single lesson in the Classics, it would make progress ever so much smoother for me.

It seems to me that this sort of thing is a good use for a wiki page. I know there's a load of stuff about it in the list archives, but searching that for concrete information can be a painful process...

Anyway, I've set up such a page here:

<http://www.holkar.net/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=WolfeWiki.SoldierNames> as part of my testing around the practicality of a general Wolfe wiki. So far I've just bunged up a load of items from SotM and a few from SoA.

If anyone else would like to contribute, by adding, improving, or whatever, please do -- there are some notes about that here: <http://www.holkar.net/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Admin.Editing>

best,

Mo

don doggett — 28 Jun 2007, 18:27 · in reply to Bob Miller

Fate was kind to me in that my mom had a copy of Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* and Rouse's translation of the *Illiad* on her bookshelf. It wasn't much, but it was a

big enough rabbit hole to get my head and shoulders in. I never came out. But Wolfe is somewhere else altogether.

Don

--- Bob Miller <bob_bageera at hotmail.com> wrote:

Bullfinch

21st-century reader whose public school education included not one single lesson in the Classics, it would make progress ever so much smoother for me.

Urth Mailing List

To post, write urth at urth.net

Subscription/information: <http://www.urth.net>

Matthew Groves — 28 Jun 2007, 18:38 · follows don doggett

Mo wrote:

It seems to me that this sort of thing is a good use for a wiki page.

[snip]

<http://www.holkar.net/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=WolfeWiki.SoldierNames>

This is extremely helpful -- much more comprehensive than anything I've found in the archives. I hope the wiki project goes forward, because I think its value to Wolfe's readers -- a community unrivaled in their need to reread, puzzle, research and discuss -- would be very great.

Who is the "river-man" that Latro meets in the very first chapter of Mist?

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 28 Jun 2007, 19:20 · in reply to David Duffy

On 6/27/07, David Duffy <David.Duffy at qimr.edu.au> wrote:

Well, my question about bickering of the gods is, where is the God of the Israelites? We seem to have carefully circled around there. I'm a bit vague as to what is going on Biblically around this period. I was wondering about Lions and B. as Solomon and Sheba but a few hundred years out ;)

Lessee ... this would be during the period of the return from Babylon. Nehemiah would be exhorting the people to rebuild the Temple and reinstate the priestly class. Not *too* long after this comes the reign of Antiochus and the Maccabees.

As for "where is the God of the Israelites," He's not shown His face to Latro that I can see, but a few things some of the gods Latro meets -- no, I can *not* cite anything from memory! -- led me to think that they are expecting to be ousted from their jobs as rulers/guides of humankind soon (on their time scale).

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

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

Soon, where Toon Town once stood will be a string of gas stations, inexpensive motels, restaurants that serve rapidly prepared food. Tire salons, automobile dealerships and wonderful, wonderful billboards reaching as far as the eye can see. My God, it'll be beautiful.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 28 Jun 2007, 19:41 · in reply to Matthew Groves

On 6/28/07, Matthew Groves <matthewalangroves at gmail.com> wrote:
Who is the "river-man" that Latro meets in the very first chapter of Mist?

I have always assumed that he was just a river-spirit (daimon) like Peneus and Achelous, a son of Tethys and Oceanus -- thus technically an Oceanad (or maybe a Potamad but I don't know if there is such a term).

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

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

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Mo Holkar / UKG — 28 Jun 2007, 21:24 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

At 20:41 28/06/2007, Dan'l wrote:

On 6/28/07, Matthew Groves <matthewalangroves at gmail.com> wrote:

Who is the "river-man" that Latro meets in the very first chapter of Mist?

I have always assumed that he was just a river-spirit (daimon) like Peneus and Achelous, a son of Tethys and Oceanus -- thus technically an Oceanad (or maybe a Potamad but I don't know if there is such a term).

I assumed that too, although it would be good to know which river it is, as there might be some particular legend associated with its spirit,

Mo

Rex Lycanthrosaurus — 28 Jun 2007, 21:43 · in reply to Matthew Groves

On Thu, 28 Jun 2007 13:38:23 -0500, "Matthew Groves"
<matthewalangroves at gmail.com> said:

Who is the "river-man" that Latro meets in the very first chapter of Mist?

His name is Asopus and the river bears his name.

Rex Lycanthrosaurus
lycanthrosaurus at fastmail.fm

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<http://www.fastmail.fm> - Send your email first class