

giants and magic gems and dudes wearing all black

The Urth list — 19 messages, 12 voices, 26 Nov 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5243>

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Son of Witz — 26 Nov 2008, 23:40

And, Witz, I think modernism need not equal postmodernism. Postmodernism is usually out and out relativism of one brand or another. I often think of modernism as having a general predisposition akin to existentialism: i.e., the universe may be mere chaos, but the individual can still create stable meaning. For a postmodernist, even the individual is just a product of other random forces, not a true controlling subject.

Yeah, it's not the same. I agree Wolfe and Joyce are moderns. Bringing up postmodernism, for me, was about the endlessly relative erosion of truth and meaning, and such as you describe.

But enough philosophy...I want to talk about giants and magic gems and dudes wearing all black...

Fukin A bro!

sucking the Autarch's brains out through a razor-straw.

fucking yer grandma when she was a little hottie.

having the biggest sword on the block

Regenerative White Fountains (I know my generative white fountain is potent cuz I knocked my wife up each time we were unprotected)

Daughters Of War (Busty R.Crumb Babes on Ice Age Beasts!! SPROING!!!, I'm putting that shit on a doom metal album cover, next chance I get.)

Backwards time travelers with more masks than Mike Patton at a Mr. Bungle concert.

~witz

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

From: Son of Witz <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org>

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

Sent: Wednesday, November 26, 2008 4:59:36 PM

Subject: Re: (urth) Severian / Christ / Logos / Apocatastasis

I don't have the time or the expertise to argue it, but I think Wolfe is a bog-standard modernist. _BotNS_ is his _Ulysses_, filled up with things to keep readers busy for the next hundred years. And like Joyce, he has sometimes had to let out a few hints for the dense -- you may recall that _Ulysses_ didn't originally have chapter titles.

Unlike Blish, I can't remember any direct allusions to Joyce in Wolfe's writings, though he channels everyone else ;).

David Duffy.

Is playing a modern game the same as embracing the tenets of postmodernism?

One can utilize the insights of a field without really embracing it's (lack of) belief system. Is playing with pagan myths the same as being Pagan?

Regarding Joyce, Yowza, was this knucklehead up a creek without a paddle when I tried to read Ulysses. someday maybe.

the closest I've got to enjoying Joyce is an excerpt of Finnegans Wake, put to Quasi-Death Metal by Sleepytime Gorilla Museum, called The Helpless Corpse Enactment. The video they made for it, here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELyco68w5ks>
is supposedly a 4 minute reenactment of Finnegan's Wake

(perhaps inspiration fodder for Wolfe-Inspired Musicians)

~witz

Jorge Rapalo — 27 Nov 2008, 01:42 · in reply to Son of Witz

We need the Book of the New Sun Heavy Metal adaptation. Call Simon Bisley! Ok, seriously, maybe Moebius could draw and Jodorowski script?

On Wed, Nov 26, 2008 at 5:40 PM, Son of Witz <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:
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Son of Witz — 27 Nov 2008, 02:34 · in reply to Jorge Rapalo

sounds about right.

what a shame their Dune never got made.

what a glorious mess that would have been.

y'all read The Incal? killer stuff.

~m

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Robert Thornton — 27 Nov 2008, 03:09 · in reply to Son of Witz

On Nov 26, 2008, at 9:34 PM, Son of Witz wrote:
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The question "can New Sun be adapted to another media" boggles my mind.

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Jorge Rapalo — 27 Nov 2008, 03:25 · in reply to Robert Thornton

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Anything can be adapted. The question is more about how much would it (inevitably) lose in the process, or how acceptable would the de rigueur changes be without losing all that is worthwhile in both the essence and the substance (in the Aristotelian sense) of the work.

Jorge Rapalo — 27 Nov 2008, 03:26 · in reply to Robert Thornton

And well, Alan Moore would say that the very idea of changing the chosen venue of expression is somewhere between odious and ridiculous.

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On Wed, Nov 26, 2008 at 5:40 PM, Son of Witz <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:

Jorge Rapalo — 27 Nov 2008, 03:31 · in reply to Son of Witz

On Wed, Nov 26, 2008 at 8:34 PM, Son of Witz <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:
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Which does touch on the current discussions about the nature of Messiahnic roles and the disconnect between effectiveness and veracity.

what a glorious mess that would have been.

The Lynch work was a mess, though not that glorious. I liked the achieved atmosphere of baroque decadence, but felt that the core of the original work was lost completely, not just that they simplified into childish literalism the messiahnic role of the lead, but that they missed that the core of the thematic threads was the mental and physical improvement of man, by changing the Atreides advantage to a scifi-ish kind of weaponry instead of a superior system of mental and physical conditioning.

y'all read The Incal? killer stuff.

Sadly, not in complete form.

Craig Brewer — 28 Nov 2008, 15:59 · in reply to Jorge Rapalo

I'm reading through Wright's collection of interviews, and I stumbled on this:

"What do [I] dislike most about [my] own writing... That so often it doesn't work -- that I can say X, flatly and in so many words, and later have editors, reviewers, and readers say 'But you never told me X.' I point out that I did, at the top of page twenty-two, or whatever, and they say, 'Well, it doesn't come through.' Obviously it doesn't, and I don't know how to make it." (78, interview with Elliott Swanson)

I don't get the sense that Wolfe is being coy here, but honestly worrying that at times he doesn't communicate what he wants to. And what strikes me about this little bit is that it suggests that so much of Wolfe's "puzzle" style of writing may not be intentional. How much of it is just how he communicates? The downside is that, as we all know and have seen on the list, it can send people looking for puzzles where there aren't any, which leads to some very creative readings of what's going on in a Wolfe story. But it also suggests that the image I think many of us have of Wolfe as a puppet master over the details of his own stories may not always be the case.

I mean, as someone recently joked, he's mortal, so of course some things just don't work like he wants. But this comment was so close to reflecting on what people admire about his style that I thought it at least worth thinking about.

Son of Witz — 28 Nov 2008, 18:06 · follows Jorge Rapalo

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that's exactly how I feel about it.

especially changing the mental/physical conditioning to a sound weapon. lamo.

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Sadly, not in complete form.

while it's not up to snuff with Wolfe, it's a damn good read. some of the alchemical imagery is made manifest in frightfully obvious (and cool) ways.

~witz

Steven — 28 Nov 2008, 19:10 · in reply to Jorge Rapalo

On Nov 26, 2008, at 10:26 PM, Jorge Rapalo wrote:

The question "can New Sun be adapted to another media" boggles my mind.

Keanu Reeves. Am I right, or what?

Back to lurkdom,

Steven Bowen

<http://bowenfinearts.com/>

Kerry Benton — 28 Nov 2008, 20:53 · in reply to Son of Witz

To this day "wierding modules" is a code word I use amongst friends when absurd and pointless changes are made in film adaptations.

While on the topic (vaguely), oh how I wish there wasn't a remake of Day the Earth Stood Still happening.

Sigh.

-k

Sent from my iPhone

On Nov 28, 2008, at 12:06 PM, "Son of Witz" <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org>

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David Stockhoff — 28 Nov 2008, 22:50 · follows Craig Brewer

Often Wolfe's writing reminds me that he's an engineer by training, and as a writer perhaps more comfortable when describing physical objects and relationships. I wonder if that's part of it.

Message: 1
Date: Fri, 28 Nov 2008 07:59:10 -0800 (PST)
From: Craig Brewer <cnbrewer at yahoo.com>
Subject: (urth) Interview Tidbit
To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID: <118690.87447.qm at web37606.mail.mud.yahoo.com>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=us-ascii

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"What do [I] dislike most about [my] own writing... That so often it doesn't work -- that I can say X, flatly and in so many words, and later have editors, reviewers, and readers say 'But you never told me X.' I point out that I did, at the top of page twenty-two, or whatever, and they say, 'Well, it doesn't come through.' Obviously it doesn't, and I don't know how to make it." (78, interview with Elliott Swanson)

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Roy C. Lackey — 28 Nov 2008, 23:17 · in reply to Craig Brewer

Craig Brewer wrote:

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style of writing may not be intentional. How much of it is just how he communicates?<<

Oh, I think he does write that way deliberately. When there is a failure to communicate, part of the fault is his and part of it is the reader's. He doesn't tell stories in a linear fashion. He omits a lot and fills in some of the skeletal details needed to understand him in a casual manner, scattering often innocent-looking lines in the text that are actually critical plot points.

Somewhere, he said something to the effect that, as a reader, he needed to be told only once that a given character is left-handed. He expects his readers to be equally attentive. When a certain tree falls in PEACE, or flowers are observed outside a kitchen door in FLF, for example, Wolfe is giving the reader important pieces of information, but he does it on the sly. If the clues are too oblique for some readers, is that his fault?

The downside is that, as we all know and have seen on the list, it can send people looking for puzzles where there aren't any, which leads to some very creative readings of what's going on in a Wolfe story.<<

Agreed. It doesn't matter if Severian has a hairy chest or not. But the picture in Ouen's locket does. Separating the wheat from the chaff is the problem.

But it also suggests that the image I think many of us have of Wolfe as a puppet master over the details of his own stories may not always be the case.<<

I think that Wolfe thinks he is pulling the right strings, or he wouldn't keep writing that way.

But I do take issue with all the crap lately about ignoring the details and just looking at the Big Picture. Each piece of the mosaic is important, particularly when the Big Picture has been broken and the pieces are scattered all over the landscape.

-Roy

Marc Aramini — 29 Nov 2008, 05:39 · follows Roy C. Lackey

I agree with Roy - Wolfe's subject matter leads us to posit all the possible things that can explain the unexplainable gaps, and often we latch onto the wrong explanations.

For example, Borski deriving the name Ida from Baldanders with his cryptonymic scheme seems a step too far for me, but the name Pelagia really does seem to combine pelagic with Agia, making it difficult to entirely dismiss these name relationships.

Wolfe's statements are also intentionally ambiguous. For example, the end of a quote I just pulled up and no one commented on, from p 220 of Epiphany of the Long Sun.

"Become the goddess of love in a century or less, said the Outsider standing not behind Silk as he had in the ball court, but before him - standing on the still water of the pool, tall and wise and kind, with a face that nearly came into focus. I would claim her in that case, long before the end. As I have so many others. As I am claiming Kypris even now because love always proceeds from me, real love, true love. First Romance.

The Outsider was the dancing man on a toy, and the water the polished toy-top on which he danced with Kypris, who was Hyacinth, and Mother, too."

These are the kinds of statements Wolfe could be talking about, because they are very easy to either over analyze or ignore completely. Hyacinth was possessed by Kypris, and this could mean either his mother is true love or that Kypris really is the mother of the special embryo pre-programmed to carry out the plan of Pas with the ability to influence others and even their stories, who knows how to fight with a sword without training. I prefer to read it as an affirmation that Kypris, the mistress of Typhon, is the mother of the special embryo planted on the whorl to bring about the completion of Pas' plan.

I can point to the text and say, it says Kypris is his mother right there on the page ... but it isn't that easy in Wolfe, and there is way too much wiggle room because of possessions, ambiguities, time warping, identities shifting, and other things that make him fun to read but it is hard to definitively prove ... that's what he is saying, right there on the page.

James Wynn — 29 Nov 2008, 06:51 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Separating the wheat from the chaff is the problem...
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when the Big Picture has been broken and the pieces
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I think Roy has put his finger on the biggest problem when reading Wolfe.

Any "big picture" must conform to the details. But it is impossible to separate the wheat details from the chaff details in a Wolfe novel *without* applying a big picture to it. You can't ask the details to vote for their own leader. And one must also remember that Wolfe typically grants himself an unreliable narrator: either crazy (There Are Doors), forgetful and crazy (Latro and, yes, Severian too), suffering from Lost Time (Able), wasn't there for most of the events (Long Sun), or doubts the authenticity of his memories (Weer and Severian). He has even offered the following explanation to readers questioning certain disjointedness between reported events and statements by his narrators and characters: "Did it never occur to you that this person might have lied?"

And one person's "big picture" is another person's "over-fecund imagination". I've seen listers reject--with venom--"big picture" explanations that conform to the details in every way merely because they personally found them aesthetically unappealing. Then I've seen those same listers happily wave alternate explanations that strike me as manufactured all but entirely of whole cloth. So, some self-awareness should be taken just prior to examining the "big pictures" presented by others...also a
willingness to be convinced if possible.

J.

Jeff Wilson — 29 Nov 2008, 10:30 · in reply to Jorge Rapalo

Jorge Rapalo wrote:
And well, Alan Moore would say that the very idea of changing the
chosen venue of expression is somewhere between odious and ridiculous.

Yes - it would be unthinkable for him to write a graphic novel about characters and situations originally appearing in prose novels.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Dave Tallman — 29 Nov 2008, 13:05 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson wrote:

Yes - it would be unthinkable for him to write a graphic novel about characters and situations originally appearing in prose novels.

I suppose you're referring to Moore's "League of Extraordinary Gentlemen," though I think he's doing something like he did in "Watchmen" -- a deconstruction of the world of heroic pulp fiction by putting all these characters into the same world and letting realistic consequences flow from that. He's not trying to re-create those characters exactly as they were in the novels, but to do something new with them.

Jorge Rapalo — 29 Nov 2008, 13:36 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Sat, Nov 29, 2008 at 7:05 AM, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:

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And that doing something new with them is probably the same rationale of the movie studios adapting works, so the point still stands, I think.

Son of Witz — 29 Nov 2008, 18:45 · follows James Wynn

Agreed. It doesn't matter if Severian has a hairy chest or not. But the picture in Ouen's locket does. Separating the wheat from the chaff is the problem.

I'm with you Roy,
though I'm COMPELLED to point out that my question about a 'hairy chest' was only relevant to the DRAWINGS I'm making of Severian, not any interpretation of the text.

but that was a funny jab. I'm sure a question like that seems REALLY strange to most folks here. But try drawing a character all solid black (no shadings) with a bare chest and arms. It looks very weird & hardly heroic. Given that he's not some hulking slob of a Frazetta executioner, and instead a strapping young lad, you might also find that you just drew something that looks like it belongs on the wall of one of those leather daddy shops in the Castro.

for what it's worth.

~witz