

There Are Doors

The Urth list — 12 messages, 5 voices, 20 May 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5448>

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David Stockhoff — 20 May 2009, 12:25

I find that one of the more haunting of his novels. That and Peace, and Free, Live, Free.

Message: 5

Date: Wed, 20 May 2009 00:56:00 -0500

From: Lane Haygood <lhaygood at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Gene Wolfe Fans Talk Politics (Again)

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

Message-ID:

<272706220905192256v75226e2bi7fc3162b46ba5c6 at mail.gmail.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1

I go out for one nice dinner with my wife and look what happens!

In brief, let me say that anyone who is interested in actually listening to a commie pinko about these things can e-mail me, respond at my blog (<http://citizen-lane.blogspot.com>) or just read up on your own at <http://www.marxists.org>. You might be surprised by how inauthentic a picture of socialism one gets from a US education, particularly in the realm of economics, where neoclassical liberalism rules the roost. We're not out of the shadow of McCarthyism yet.

Now, back to Wolfe. I bought "There Are Doors" at a used bookstore last week. I am thoroughly impressed.

James Wynn — 21 May 2009, 15:20 · in reply to David Stockhoff

I bought "There Are Doors" at a used bookstore last week. I am thoroughly impressed.

TAD is the only "parallel universe" story to offer a systemic justification the close similarities in parallel universes that have major variations in their histories: Nearby universes are influencing each other at a non-rational level.

J.

Jordon Flato — 21 May 2009, 15:26 · in reply to James Wynn

This story left me Non-Plussed.

Which is a sure indication I need to read it four more times.

On Thu, May 21, 2009 at 8:20 AM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
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Jeff Wilson — 21 May 2009, 16:00 · in reply to James Wynn

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What's non-rational about people spreading artifacts, memes, and genes back and forth?

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

James Wynn — 21 May 2009, 16:09 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

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That's not the explanation given. Green compares the universes to two adjacent guitar strings tuned to the same note. When you pluck one, the other resonates. By the same token, men in our world wear black at their weddings. There's no "reason" for it. They wear black here, because they wear black there. They wear black there for a rational reason: The man is about to die.

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But there is **also** a vector of frequent physical travel that the author takes pains to display, so that resonance explanation need not be valid. It may just be another of Green's notions.

As for it being the only story with such a justification, I can think of at least three others: Lawrence Watt-Evans' *_Out of This World_* and Christopher Stasheff's Greymarye series, where the present days in worlds of different histories are similar because the mental powers that bridge between the worlds only works between worlds where someone is thinking with a similar vocabulary along similar lines at either end. John M. Ford's *_Fugue State_* and his metafictional work in GURPS TIME TRAVEL establishes that of all possible worlds, only the most similar are reachable with finite resources, and "similar" comes in various degrees.

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

James Wynn — 21 May 2009, 17:45 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

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Okay. Then it is the only one I had read and one of the few. It also predates two of the three you named. Ford's paradigm (he was also published by Tor, I see) seems like such an obvious extrapolation on TAD (I thought the same thing when reading it) that I wonder if he was inspired by it.

Physical travel is not rare, but there is little sign that it is common or long term. It's not the same as two adjacent neighborhoods. I think Green's explanation is the most likely. I'm sure his psychiatrist would not find the other explanation particularly enticing.

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Jeff Wilson — 21 May 2009, 21:35 · in reply to James Wynn

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In fact, I first read *_Fugue State_* and *_The Death of Doctor Island_* the same day because they were published as an Ace Double. :)

I doubt JMF took more from TAD than from Moorcock's *Eternal Champion* or a dozen other sources of heroic striving across the boundaries of continuity, intentional or otherwise.

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I think it may be exactly that! The Chinese man's shop in the Goddess' world has shelves of chattels from Green's world, and there's the intricate arrangement of utility wires strung through both neighborhoods, making dozens of possible doorways for people to weave through. Also, the asylum seems to house people over the long term, and enough of them are from Green's world that the handy man is so very tired of explaining why they can't have a color TV. And wozzname, the Nixonian guy who does the subversive plays, he seems to have been transplanted for good.

I think

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I think the resonance theory as Green conceives it is incomplete. There should be evidence of many worlds' influence on his, as well as ours on theirs, as there should have been at the very least several pagan powers, even if they have been subsumed by Laura or the Elohim by now.

James B. Jordan — 22 May 2009, 00:12 · in reply to James Wynn

Well, but remember that Green is not too bright. He's one of Wolfe's successful, I think, usages of a rather low IQ character who is still good and good-hearted. Remember how SilkHorn has some very odd medical views, which we as readers know to be wrong.

I'm not really disputing you. I'm just tossing in a caveat. What Green thinks might not actually be so.

What is clear is that Mama (the church) and her Boys (priests) want to save (redeem) this parallel world. It's an Italian Restaurant (the sacramental church) that is the main Door.

Some may not know it, but this is Wolfe's favorite novel.

"Hi! I'm your doll! And I can talk!" -- you gotta love it!

Nutria the Nutricious

At 11:09 AM 5/21/2009, you wrote:
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James B. Jordan — 22 May 2009, 00:17 · in reply to James B. Jordan

Another question is how much Petrarch there is here. Laura, you know.

From Wikiland:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Francesco_Petrarca01.jpg> []

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Francesco_Petrarca01.jpg> []

Laura de Noves

On

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/April_6>April
6, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/1327>>1327,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Good_Friday>Good Friday, after giving up his vocation as a priest, the sight of a woman called "Laura" in the church of Sainte-Claire d'
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Avignon>>Avignon awoke in him a lasting passion, celebrated in the Rime sparse ("Scattered rhymes"). Later, Renaissance poets who copied Petrarch's style named this collection of 366 poems
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Il_Canzoniere>Il Canzoniere ("Song Book"). Laura may have been
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Laura_de_Noves>Laura de Noves, the wife of Count
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/w/index.php?title=Hugues_de_Sade&action=edit&redlink=1>Hugues de Sade (ancestor of the
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Marquis_de_Sade>Marquis de Sade). There is little definite information in Petrarch's work concerning Laura, except that she is lovely to look at, fair-haired, with a modest, dignified bearing. Laura and Petrarch had little or no personal contact. According to his "Secretum", she refused him for the very proper reason that she was already married to another man. He channeled his feelings into love poems that were exclamatory rather than persuasive, and wrote prose that showed his contempt for men who pursue women. Upon her death in 1348, the poet finds that his
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Grief>>grief is as difficult to live with as was his former despair. Later in his "Letter to Posterity", Petrarch wrote: "In my younger days I struggled constantly with an overwhelming but pure love affair - my only one, and I would have struggled with it longer had not premature death, bitter but salutary for me, extinguished the cooling flames. I certainly wish I could say that I have always been entirely free from desires of the flesh, but I would be lying if I did".

While it is possible she was an idealized or pseudonymous character - particularly since the name "Laura" has a
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Linguistics>>linguistic connection to the poetic "laurels" Petrarch coveted - Petrarch himself always denied it. His frequent use of l'aura, as in "Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi" is also remarkable: for example, the line may both mean "her hair was all over Laura's body", and "the wind ("l'aura") blew through her hair". There is psychological realism in the description of Laura and Petrarch's love is nothing conventional - unlike some cliché women of
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Troubadour>>troubadours and
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Courtly_love>courtly love. Her presence causes him unspeakable joy, but his unrequited love creates unendurable desires, inner conflicts between the ardent lover and the
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Christian_mysticism>mystic Christian, making it impossible to reconcile the two, his quest for love a hopeless, endless agony.

Laura is unreachable - the few physical descriptions are vague, almost unpalpable as the love pines for, and such is perhaps the power of his verse, which lives off the melodies it evokes against the fading, diaphane image that is no more consistent than a ghost.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/Francesco_De_Sanctis>Francesco De Sanctis remarks much the same thing in his Storia della lera italiana, and contemporary critics agree on the powerful music of his verse: Gianfranco Contini, in a famous essay on Petrarch's language ("Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca". Petrarca, Canzoniere. Turin, Einaudi, 1964) has spoken of linguistic indetermination - Petrarch never rises above the "bel pi?" (her lovely foot): Laura is too holy to be painted, it is an awe-inspiring goddess. Sensuality and passion are rather suggested by the rhythm and music that shape the vague contours of the lady.

Nutria

James B. Jordan
Director, Biblical Horizons
Box 1096
Niceville, FL 32588
<http://www.biblicalhorizons.com>

Jeff Wilson — 22 May 2009, 01:49 · in reply to James B. Jordan

James B. Jordan wrote:

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I'm not really disputing you. I'm just tossing in a caveat. What Green thinks might not actually be so.

What is clear is that Mama (the church) and her Boys (priests) want to save (redeem) this parallel world. It's an Italian Restaurant (the sacramental church) that is the main Door.

Wow! That totally slipped past me.

So what does the moopsball game signify? A commentary on Damon Knight?

Some may not know it, but this is Wolfe's favorite novel.

"Hi! I'm your doll! And I can talk!" -- you gotta love it!

I'm not sure what this is supposed to be, other than a sign of Wolfe's general fondness for toy people in his stories.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson@io.com
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James Wynn — 22 May 2009, 14:24 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

I think the resonance theory as Green conceives it is incomplete. There should be evidence of many worlds' influence on his, as well as ours on theirs, as there should have been at the very least several pagan powers, even if they have been subsumed by Laura or the Elohim by now.

Maybe there are. Green only goes to one, so he is only able to recognize influences of Laura's world on his.

The obvious response to this is, "Then shouldn't Wolfe have alluded to those other worlds?" Maybe, but not necessarily. But if Wolfe intended a more elaborate, "particle-based" cause for the similarities of the two worlds (rather than a "wave-based" one), I would have expected someone else to pose it. Unlike the mistaken expert-theorizing in Short Sun and Soldier, Green is the only offering an explanation at all. Green's theorizing --I think-- is more that of VRT/Marsch in "The Fifth Head of Cerberus": The right one but delivered by a non-expert.

J.