

An Evil Guest

The Urth list — 9 messages, 4 voices, 23 May 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6019>

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Antonin Scriabin — 23 May 2011, 17:08

I just joined the list, so I don't know if this topic has been talked about in a ton of depth already. I really enjoyed An Evil Guest! It was the first non-Solar Cycle books by Gene Wolfe that I had read, and I "tricked" myself into not thinking it could be as clever and dense as those. I have been looking over it more and reading about different theories online, and was wondering what you all thought of the idea that Margaret is Cassie from the future (after the harpy-creatures leave her on the island to become bedraggled and unrecognizable). The way I understand it, future-Cassie goes back in time by traveling in a hopper at immense speeds, and intends somehow to manipulate the events experienced by present-Cassie in order to save Reis.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 23 May 2011, 17:26 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Antonin Scriabin wrote:

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Antonin,

Welcome to the list.

Yes, this topic has been talked about, and you might find some interesting debate on it in the archives. But the fact that someone else came up with it independently seems to offer some weight to the idea.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Antonin Scriabin — 23 May 2011, 17:28 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Actually I just found a ton of stuff on Wolfe Wiki, that originated on this list! Sorry to bring up an old topic. I think I am going to re-read An Evil Guest ... hopefully I will pick up on more clues as to the identity of Margaret.

On Mon, May 23, 2011 at 1:26 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
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Daniel Petersen — 23 May 2011, 18:20 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

So glad to hear you liked it, Antonin! I just finished it and found it VERY interesting and exciting on certain levels (though baffling and frustrating too - which is only to be expected, surely!). I feel like most of the reviews and comments I've run into so far seem more dubious and negative than not. I was utterly surprised to find that it more or less ACTUALLY lived up to all the blurbs trying to succinctly describe it on the book cover.

I actually think it may end up being a helpful key or guide in certain ways to reading the Solar Cycle - I feel like Wolfe more overtly showcased some of his unique forms and methods of narrative in this book, and some of his Solar Cycle themes also.

Your theory about Margaret kind of blows my mind, but I'll have to see how people are arriving at that hypothesis. It would at least partly make sense of why I found Margaret such an interesting minor character. (I felt there was some fairly self-conscious reference to her being - or at least being like - a little 'gray' elf or sprite or fairy or some such creature.) Is there any direct reference to time travel in the novel?

-DOJP

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 18:30 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Additionally, check out the story "The Tree is My Hat". It takes place on Cassie's island. (that's what Wolfe called it).

On 5/23/2011 12:28 PM, Antonin Scriabin wrote:
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Antonin Scriabin — 23 May 2011, 18:38 · in reply to Daniel Petersen

Yes, there are references to time travel, though they are kind of subtle. Specifically, it is mentioned several times that when sending interplanetary electronic mail at fast enough speeds, a response to a letter can arrive before the original letter had been sent. Thus, the reply to a latter went back in time to a point before the first letter was actually sent. This causes problems, so there are restrictions on that sort of thing in the universe.

Also, the Margaret as future-Cassie theory is not mine, I found out about it here:

<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=AnEvilGuest.MysteriousMargaret>

I believe there is also a reference to a "robin fighting its own reflection" or something to that effect, which reminds me of the double Hildegrins in The Book of the New Sun. Time travel resulting in multiple versions of a character bouncing around different timelines are definitely nothing new for Wolfe!

On Mon, May 23, 2011 at 2:20 PM, Daniel Petersen <danielottojackpetersen at gmail.com> wrote:
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Antonin Scriabin — 23 May 2011, 18:39 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Sorry about the typos ... I am definitely typing too fast!

On Mon, May 23, 2011 at 2:38 PM, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegaurdian at gmail.com> wrote:
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Daniel Petersen — 23 May 2011, 18:43 · in reply to James Wynn

On Mon, May 23, 2011 at 7:30 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
Additionally, check out the story "The Tree is My Hat". It takes place on Cassie's island. (that's what Wolfe called it).

Oh yeah! I'd heard he said that before I read AEG and forgot! Amazing! That makes even more sense of the strong impression I was getting that the South Sea island portion of this novel felt so much like 'The Tree Is My Hat' (and also reminded me of the shark-dwarves in his story 'Black Shoes').
Cool, thanks.

Wolfe is so good at consistently re-visiting a setting in a totally different context. He does this in his story 'The Night Chough' - the little tale itself feels like it has little or nothing to do with the

story of TBotNS, but the SETTING feels exactly as if you're on the Blue of New Sun. Once Wolfe builds a place, it really stays put! It seems he can go back any time he wants. I am seriously, seriously in awe of that.

-DOJP

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I love that part. I guess I hadn't thought of it as time travel per se - seemed like more of a spatial bending sort of thing going on there that only
looked like time disruption/rearrangement/delay/whatever - but ok, I think I can see that.

So maybe this will affect or relate to the theory that perhaps even Gideon Chase and Bill Reis are two manifestations of the same person (thought, unlike Margaret and Cassie - Gid and Bill are never in the same place at the same time). Almost definitely *some* form of literary 'doubling' going on in this novel, surely!

A lovely, playful novel, even with its (potential) problems!

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