

let it be, let it be

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 16 Apr 1997

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Reusch — 16 Apr 1997, 07:50

OK, TBoTNS was a *wonderful* book, but I can't help feeling that, with Mantis' excellent Lexicon, and all of the time and discussion which has revolved about it, it's being hashed to death. Why do we all continue to read Wolfe's books, the same book several times? Because each time we find another question, or the answer to a previous mystery. That's what makes it interesting. I, for one, would like to see a few mysteries remain in TBoTNS. Let's open this up to include some of Wolfe's less-discussed, more obscure works.

Like Castlevuew! The first time that I read this book, I remember thinking that reading each chapter was like watching an episode of Twin Peaks. You had no idea what just happened, or what was just about to happen. The second time through, I thought that I had a handle on it, up until the final scene in front of the castle. Can someone enlighten me, considering that I don't know much more of the Arthurian mythos than does Hollywood?

And how about Peace? I've read the book several times without penetrating past the notion that it's more or less a collection of short stories which are in some way tied to the memories/fantasies of the dead or dying central character, sort of like Bradbury's Illustrated Man. What am I missing?

Well, I can't help but throw one question/observation out about Urth of the New Sun. The writing style of this books starts out dramatically different than the four which precede it. Has anyone noticed this, or thought why? At first I thought that it was just less polished by Wolfe, but now I wonder. A different author? Severian 1, or Severian 2? Any thoughts on this one?

Vance

Jim Jordan — 16 Apr 1997, 14:26 · follows Reusch

At 07:50 AM 4/16/97 -0000, you wrote:

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I think Castlevuew is "about" perception. The various houses, castles, spaceships, etc. may all be the same thing (the Winnebago). The "wild ride" is perceived differently by various people. Etc. I don't "get" the details at the end either, but remember that we are ALL descended from Arthur -- something easy to prove, and a point Wolfe made to me -- so that all the men are Arthurs, all the women Morganas, etc. Again: perception and role-playing.

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All I know are: (a) Weer is definitely dead; the falling tree disturbs his grave; and (b) the book is a series of fictionalized autobiographical reflections over Wolfe's own life. I did discuss Peace with Gene in my interview on Duggan's website.

Oh, and "The Changeling" (in Gene Wolfe's Book of Days) is set in the same world as Peace (same town; same ghost story aspects) -- but I've never figured it out.

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I account for it as a Severian ten years older. That is plenty of time for a man's style to change quite dramatically, especially after ten years of being a sedate monarch.

Nutria (Jim Jordan)

P.S. Should we carry our Whorl nicknames over onto this Urthine list?

Doug Eigsti — 16 Apr 1997, 15:56 · follows Jim Jordan

Vance,

Although I, too, think Michael Driussi's LEXICON URTHUS is excellent, I would not say that the depths of Urth have been plummed. I will not soon tire of discussing the minutia of NEW SUN. I can, however, echo your sentiment of widening the discussion to Wolfe's other fine works.

Let me start by commenting on one of the books you mentioned, PEACE. This is Wolfe's first great book. The piece that declared to all that he is now a master, his masterpeace. It still contains the greatest number of nested stories of any of his books. Yes, It does read like a series of connected stories, but they are not connected linearly, as is Bradbury's THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, but vertically, stories within stories, revolving around the life/death of Weer(Wolfe). Alden Weer manipulates his after death "reality" to the extent that the reader is kept guessing as to what is a real event and what is a death dream; or a dream within a daydream in the real world. Even among Wolfe books it is difficult to describe to someone the wonders of PEACE, but let's not let that stop us from trying.

=Talon=
douge at nti.com

Nutria,

Since there is no naming convention for NEW SUN it would be easier to retain our Vironeese names. It is in the same universe as Urth, or maybe we can't even agree on that.

Jim Jordan — 16 Apr 1997, 14:45 · follows Doug Eigsti

At 07:50 AM 4/16/97 -0000, you wrote:

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I submit that lots of mysteries remain, because Wolfe is not through with Severian. We clearly have not arrived at the end of his life. Wolfe says tht Severian is on a search for True Love, who is God Himself. (See my interview on Duggan's website). The three symbols on Severian's grave are rose, ship, and fountain. The rose is not only a labyrinth (see Borges and Eco), but the symbol of the Lover (since men and women are labyrinths, incomprehensible to one another). The first 4-volume set deals with the claw of the rose (and the coin of Vodalus, which sets things in motion, but it not on the tomb). Politics is the theme. The next volume with the ship (Church), and possibly the fountain (life). Good works (charity) seems to be the theme. But I predict a future volume or set of volumes to deal more with the rose. BTW, I've never asked Wolfe if he plans more for Severian, but I'm pretty sure he does.

Nutria (Jim Jordan)