

Hues of Hell

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 04 Jul 1997

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Alice Turner — 04 Jul 1997, 08:12

SPOILERS, ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE PREPARED TO ENJOY STORY

Good summary, Ron. My own reaction to this story (and, I'm afraid, to many of Wolfe's shorter stories) is one of irritation. To me, the conclusion we're meant to draw---that the alien has somehow invaded the womb of Marilyn, the female crew member--and the emotion we're meant to infer, apprehension of catastrophe, have not been earned. Hartwell is mistaken in comparing the ending to that of 2001; it is quite the opposite, a cosmic Rosemary's Baby situation. How do I know? Birds don't lie! I'm not being flippant; it seems clear to me that the bird (I thought it was a parrot, not a macaw) is meant to be the only crew figure not subject to illusion, and therefore reliable.

But to me all the mumbo-jumbo about the Egg and the yolk and the sperm and placental imagery (it's all there right out front) juxtaposed with the (possibly psychotic) male crew member's babble of hell and demons and shadows (the mother ship is, all too tellingly, the Shadow Show) seemed superficial and contrived. The story needed more room; it seems merely sketchy, an obvious sort of metaphor for the not very fresh observation that every pregnant woman harbors an alien within her.

-alga-