

Hues Revisited

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Jul 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/94>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Joel Priddy — 11 Jul 1997, 14:47

My first impression of "Hues" was that it was a sci-fi Antichrist story. When it was brought up on the list and I was thinking back to it, pretty much all I could remember about was "baby space Satan." But I couldn't figure out what the point of the story was. I expected some moral point to be made, after all, if you're gonna get saddled with raising the Antichrist you really ought to have some sort of fatal flaw, right? An innocent getting stuck with that sort of evil seems like the subject of a much longer work.

When the pulp-magazine cover imagery was mentioned, I thought that made perfect sense. I could immediately imagine Wolfe using as his point of departure some lurid painting of a shocked man and woman with their pet bird and robot staring into some energy field from which a demon was emerging. I bet that if we looked, we could find dozens of covers that depicted almost that exact scene.

Upon re-reading the story, I think if there is a fatal flaw or sin shared by the characters, it's idolatry. Kyle states that he worships life. From the last line of the story, it seems that Marilyn does also, even if she might not say it as directly as Kyle did. One might say that worship of life is worshipping the visible face of the Divine. If you believe in a literal Hell, and if through the lens of science fiction you propose a physical existence to Hell, it is necessary to believe that some Life is inherently evil. Not realizing this in time is what dooms the crew. Here's a thought: we often see Wolfe deal with the Divine in a science fiction setting, but rarely with the Infernal. This is sort of a turn-around from most entertainment, as alga can attest, where the demonic is usually considered more interesting. The unpleasantness in Wolfe's worlds comes from the Fallen state of the world's inhabitants, not an outside metaphysical force. Typhon is not the anti-Outsider. Even Erebus and Abia don't strike me as being stand-ins for Satan (although I could be wrong. I read them as just having very different goals from humanity... being adversaries, not The Adversary).

A word of the Antichrist/anti-Messiah distinction: Hasn't the Catholic church declared people to be antichrists over the years? Really out-of-line popes, and people like that? I think the term pretty much applies to anyone whose goals are the opposite of Christ's. Thanks to the whole sub-genre of horror movies that followed Rosemary, I think it's well-established to think of a demonically possessed unborn baby as the/a antichrist.

My favorite line from this story is Kyle's response to Skips question "Do you have a soul?":

"...I've seen a printout, though of course I didn't read it all; it was very long."

cephalothorax, the dandruff shampoo