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The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 20 Feb 2001

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BraveSaintCroix — 20 Feb 2001, 22:08

Now a series of rhetorical questions: At what point does intentional obscurity on the part of an author become a self-indulgent pretention that gets in the way of artistic expression? How much do we really love Wolfe because he's a great writer and how much because it's fun to solve puzzles? Has Wolfe crossed the line from not giving all the answers to creating texts that must be pored over by talmudic scholars rather than actual readers of novels? Is Wolfe writing for a smaller, and smaller audience of expert Wolfe-interpreters? Discuss.

Wait. . . do I answer these rhetorical questions or not? Well, you said discuss, so here goes:

How much do we really love Wolfe because he's a great writer and how much because it's fun to solve puzzles?

This is the only question I really feel qualified to answer, because after finishing RTTW I've been wondering about it myself. I read Wolfe because I love to read Wolfe. The Short Sun and Long Sun, in my opinion, are his best works. As for how obscure these books are, I don't know. Most of the discussion here goes over my head, but I like to skim it and see what I missed and what I caught in my own reading of his novels. Why do I like RTTW? It's written beautifully. I love Silk. I think he's the coolest character in any book I've ever read. I love the way Wolfe weaves in his Christian beliefs (which I share) into his novels. I like Oreb. I love the Outsider. I like being able to finish his books and sit back and really think about them, instead of having everything spelled out. I like getting on this list after I finish and comparing notes.

-Steve

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.