

Smith & Vance

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 18 Mar 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/219>

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.

m.driussi — 18 Mar 1997, 03:32

Reply: Item #4788907 from WHORL at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET00#

Nutria,

OTOH we know (from interviews as well as Wolfe-written articles) that Gene Wolfe read and deeply admired Jack Vance's THE DYING EARTH. And most readers, I think, will sense a certain similarity in writing styles between Vance and Wolfe: high style, macabre humor, cultural anthropology, etc.

Yet (and maybe this is just me, I don't know) Wolfe's work in spirit and in tone is actually much closer to Cordwainer Smith's work than it is to Vance's. Part of this is probably [hedgeword] due to the fact that nearly all of the time [hedge] Vance is lambasting Religion as a controlling tool used by the dominant minority over the gullible population. Vance belongs to a tradition of anti-religion genre writers going back to Edgar Rice Burroughs and before. (He is also a satirist of the arbitrary conventions found in every society.)

So the paradox: TBOTNS is said to be (and understood to be) a descendant of Vance's THE DYING EARTH (and Clark Ashton Smith's "Zothique," but I don't want to argue about that at the moment <g>), yet in reality TBOTNS is more like Cordwainer Smith's work, =even though= nobody is claiming that Wolfe ever read such.

(Personally I see a lot of difference between Herbert's work and Cordwainer Smith's work: in soundbyte terms, because Herbert is working out Machiavellian themes and Smith is working out Christian themes. [Now, I am aware that there is a reading of DUNE that sees it as a wonderful affirmation of Islam--not to detract from those who believe this, still I remain sceptical, due to the Machiavellian focus of much of Herbert's work.]

=mantis=

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Jim Jordan — 18 Mar 1997, 14:15 · follows m.driussi

Mantis,

Oh, yeah. Wolfe loves Vance. He told me nothing of Vance's should ever go out of print. Probably an exaggeration.

I agree regarding perspective re: Dune and Norstrilia. But the similarities are superficially striking. The story of a young (super-)man's coming of age. Extension of life from always-dying sheep (Christian symbol) or sandworms (potentially symbol of evil, but not in Herbert, I think). That's all I had in mind.

Well, back to Wolfe!

Nutria the Rat

At 03:32 AM 3/18/97 GMT, you wrote:

[Posted from Whorl, the mailing list for Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun]

Reply: Item #4788907 from WHORL at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET00#

Nutria,

OTOH we know (from interviews as well as Wolfe-written articles) that Gene Wolfe read and deeply admired Jack Vance's THE DYING EARTH. And most readers, I think, will sense a certain similarity in writing styles between Vance and Wolfe: high style, macabre humor, cultural anthropology, etc.

Yet (and maybe this is just me, I don't know) Wolfe's work in spirit and in tone is actually much closer to Cordwainer Smith's work than it is to Vance's. Part of this is probably [hedgeword] due to the fact that nearly all of the time [hedge] Vance is lambasting Religion as a controlling tool used by the dominant minority over the gullible population. Vance belongs to a tradition of anti-religion genre writers going back to Edgar Rice Burroughs and before. (He is also a satirist of the arbitrary conventions found in every society.)

So the paradox: TBOTNS is said to be (and understood to be) a descendant of Vance's THE DYING EARTH (and Clark Ashton Smith's "Zothique," but I don't want to argue about that at the moment <g>), yet in reality TBOTNS is more like Cordwainer Smith's work, =even though= nobody is claiming that Wolfe ever read such.

(Personally I see a lot of difference between Herbert's work and Cordwainer Smith's work: in soundbyte terms, because Herbert is working out Machiavellian themes and Smith is working out Christian themes. [Now, I am aware that there is a reading of DUNE that sees it as a wonderful affirmation of Islam--not to detract from those who believe this, still I remain sceptical, due to the Machiavellian focus of much of Herbert's work.]

=mantis=

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com