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The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 19 Jun 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/356>

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Alice Turner — 19 Jun 1997, 09:35

I want to object to a creeping assumption in the last few posts, that Severian is Christian. Wolfe may be [is] Christian, it's possible that the Short Sun books may move in a Christian direction, like a good deal of the Cordwainer Smith or C.S. Lewis work, and Severian himself may be "a form of the Outsider," but that doesn't make him a Christian as I understand it. An avatar of Christ, maybe, which is a little different.

-alga-

Jim Jordan — 19 Jun 1997, 23:38 · follows Alice Turner

At 09:35 AM 6/19/97 -0400, you wrote:

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

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-alga-

Dear Alga,

I don't want to get into an Alga-Nutria war, but once again I need to bring in Gene's own statement, to me, that Severian is not a Christ figure but a Christian figure. That's from the horse's (pardon, wolf's) mouth.

Now, the difference I see between the Severian and Silk novels is that we see Silk's religious trauma directly, while very rarely do we see Severian's faith in action. I don't recall any point of conversion for Severian, and he certainly is not a "good" Christian. (Recall how he can't wait to commit adultery once he gets on The Ship!) Gene's explanation to me when I asked him about this is that Severian comes from a horrible background and is trying to overcome it, and at some points either doesn't know better, or backslides easily. That was the gist of his reply.

I have not re-read the Severian series since my interview with Wolfe (which is available at Paul Duggan's site, though I don't think those questions are in the interview), and so I cannot point to specific passages that hint in this direction.

Frankly, when I first read the four original Severians, I decided that this was a closed gnostic universe, and that Severian was an antichrist (like the clones in Fifth Head). Wolfe was not happy with that at all when I wrote him about it. That's how the discussion got going.

So, Alga, I guess you and I both need to re-read and try to see what we missed the first time(s).

Nutria