

Voided Cross

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 2 voices, 25 Jul 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/409>

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Michael Straight — 25 Jul 1997, 10:44

From Wolfe's answers to our questions:

18. "Describe . . . a voided cross and a gammadion." A gammadion is any figure composed of gamma-shaped pieces. The most common gammadions are the swastika and the voided cross. (The swastika is ancient, by the way, and is found in both East Indian and American Indian art.) To make a voided cross, arrange four gammas, not touching, so that the points point toward a common center.

What are the "points" of a gamma? Is this what he's describing? It's the best I could think of from that description (monospaced font required!). If you need them to be "not touching" to make the voided cross, how are they linked together?

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O X
OO XXXX

ZZZZ QQ
Z Q
Q
-Rostrum

Doug Eigsti — 28 Jul 1997, 17:09 · follows Michael Straight

From Wolfe's answers to our questions:

18. "Describe . . . a voided cross and a gammadion." A gammadion is any figure composed of gamma-shaped pieces. The most common gammadions are the swastika and the voided cross. (The swastika is ancient, by the way, and is found in both East Indian and American Indian art.) To make a voided cross, arrange four gammas, not touching, so that the points point toward a common center.

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-Rostrum

Rostrom,

Yes, I think your diagram accurately illustrates what he was describing. Your point on linking is a valid one, although there are few of us who think it matters. The physical object worn by chapter members in LONG SUN is comprised of four gamma shaped objects that are useful as screwdrivers. These are somehow linked to form the Void Cross. To me it seems that any linking device intruding into the "void" area would either fill the void or alter the "gamma".

I dredged out an ancient post from the archives describing my favorite shape for the Void Cross:

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This is composed solely of four true gammas with no linking bridges. The void in the center is a plus sign shaped cross. To me this better satisfies the requirements of Pas's Void Cross than does the one described by Gene Wolfe in his response to the train question. Note: that Gene Wolfe was not asked to describe Pas's void cross but only a "voided cross and a gammadion". His reply stated the encyclopedia definitions for both, and not necessarily the void cross worn by Silk, Quetzal, and Remora.

Do we take Gene Wolfe speaking ex cathedra on this, or any other subject, over the evidence found in the text. I find it stifling to think that an impression garnered by a reader from the text can be called wrong. If a reader's impression is as well supported in the text as an alternative view, who's to say which is correct? If they do not arrive at the identical conclusion that the author had intended perhaps the author did not express himself clearly enough. Fiction is an artform. A painter must be judged by what he has put up on the canvas not by what he says to the art lovers looking on in the gallery. An actor's performance can only be judged by what the audience sees on the screen, not by his motivation or preparation. A writer of fiction can be appreciated only by the words on the page. Gene Wolfe is one of my favorite artists. The pictures he paints in my head are among the most beautiful of any writer. They probably do not look like those of any other reader.

I noticed that after the answer train came in, the Pike's Ghost dialog was terminated. The aquastor theory was sounding good to me, but Gene Wolfe stated that machines were not involved. End of discussion? Don't let the answer train railroad us into seeing pictures that aren't there.

=Talon=

Michael Straight — 29 Jul 1997, 09:44 · follows Doug Eigsti

On Mon, 28 Jul 1997, Doug Eigsti wrote:

I dredged out an ancient post from the archives describing my favorite shape for the Void Cross:

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If this shape isn't the one Wolfe had in mind, it ought to be :-), I was just trying to puzzle out his answer.

Maybe he didn't have a specific shape in mind, but rather wanted to invoke both the voided cross and the swastika, even if they are contradictory.

-Rostrum

Doug Eigsti — 29 Jul 1997, 09:35 · follows Michael Straight

Rostrum writes:

If this shape isn't the one Wolfe had in mind, it ought to be :-), I was just trying to puzzle out his answer.

Maybe he didn't have a specific shape in mind, but rather wanted to invoke both the voided cross and the swastika, even if they are contradictory.

I would say you are onto something. My concept of Wolfe is that he likes to create scenarios where several, possibly contradictory, results are possible. The classic example is SEVEN AMERICAN NIGHTS; Which egg, if any, contained the hallucinogen? This kind of mind game is what makes Wolfe so appealing to me. To pin down his text to mean any specific thing is to limit our enjoyment. An open ended problem stays in the mind longer while we continue to ponder a solution. If my mind reaches closure on a topic I tend to put it

aside, whereas an unsolved mystery stays in active memory to be called up when triggered by other related thoughts, to be relived time and again.

=Talon=