

Rostum & Nutria

The Whorl list — 5 messages, 5 voices, 08 Sep 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/428>

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m.driussi — 08 Sep 1997, 19:22

Reply: Item #7943197 from WHORL at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET00#

Gentlemen!

I don't want to sound alarmed, but I think you are both needlessly painting yourselves into antagonistic corners.

To whit: Nutria writes "[Wolfe] has to come on-line and tell us point-blank: the Outsider is God!"

Well no, he doesn't =have= to, unless I've missed something (and I admit freely that I might have); he didn't even bring it up himself, it was the question(s) posed by others that he answered. He's not trying to convert anyone, to the best of my understanding. (Even Clinton had to answer some questions from the MTV crowd regarding underwear that he would not have otherwise blurted out in the middle of an average press conference.)

And Rostrum replies: "we should be forced to evaluate the narrator's experiences for ourselves."

Gosh, this conjures up visions of voluntary/involuntary dungeons! Granted, I myself like to hear and read all sorts of different angles and datapoints, even those that I don't particularly believe at all; and somewhere there must be my polar opposite, an authentic self-reader unsullied by the readings, researchings, or regurgitations of others, hermetically sealed away in the sterile environment of a corklined room, eschewing all intercourse with the community of Wolfe readers.

Or this seems like a desire for Wolfe to be as secretive as Pynchon or Salinger. "Please don't answer any questions or do any interviews! Please disappear!"

I trust that these extremes are just mirage-like distortions brought on by the contortions of debate and do not represent the real beliefs of Nutria or Rostrum. So come on guys, play nice!

Hey, Nutria! If you're going to get photocopies from alga (that NYRSF piece) maybe you should offer in exchange a photocopy of Peter Wright's essays from "Foundation No. 66"?

=mantis=

Jim Jordan — 08 Sep 1997, 16:09 · follows m.driussi

At 07:22 PM 9/8/97 GMT, you wrote:

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

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Gentlemen!

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To whit: Nutria writes "[Wolfe] has to come on-line and tell us point-blank: the Outsider is God!"

Well no, he doesn't =have= to, unless I've missed something (and I admit freely that I might have); he didn't even bring it up himself, it was the question(s) posed by others that he answered.

Well, I asked the question, and only because there was so much debate about it right here! I'm not trying to be antagonistic. I was only pointing out that some of the clues in Wolfe are found in Christianity and the Bible, two sources that many modern readers are strikingly unfamiliar with; or with which they are only marginally familiar, with the result that they miss important clues and chase rabbits.

If you don't know the history of philosophy, you will miss some of the cute things in Asimov's *I, Robot.* Asimov might have been disappointed in readers who missed such things, regarding the history of philosophy as something people should generally know. That was my only point.

Now, "Wolfe is not trying to convert anybody." Hmmm. Well, that's going to depend on what you mean by "convert." In "The Detective of Dreams," a stealthy invasion of the gospel is presented as the corrective to tyranny. I think that's pretty much what is going on in both the Severian and Silk narratives also, and elsewhere. Sure, that's just how Wolfe looks at things. But, when a Christian communicates his ideas and worldview, that CAN be called "evangelism" in some broad sense, no? Tyranny (statism), idolatry, and Christianity are major themes and concerns in most of Wolfe's serious work. But of course, he is not writing tracts, any more than Shakespeare was writing tracts when he wrote plays to try and teach England's rulers how to rule.

Just some grist for your mill.

Unantagonistically,

Nutria

Kevin J. Maroney — 08 Sep 1997, 17:30 · follows Jim Jordan

At 07:22 PM 9/8/97 GMT, you wrote:

Hey, Nutria! If you're going to get photocopies from alga (that NYRSF piece) maybe you should offer in exchange a photocopy of Peter Wright's essays from "Foundation No. 66"?

Hmm. Well, I don't want to be *too* picky, but all of these works *are* copyrighted....

Anyway, I think it's pretty clear that the Outsider is both God and a burst blood-vessel in Silk's head. While it is true that the Outsider shows Silk many things that Silk could not possibly have know, remember always that

The Book of the Long Sun is a *composed* text, written by a human being, who wants to make it look like Silk had a real revelation.

I don't put much credence in the idea that the Outsider is Severian, incidentally, even despite the multigendered polyphony. The entire Enlightenment experience is polyphonous; of course

the Outsider "is", as well. I think we might be looking for connections where none are present. (What? Can it be?)

Wombat

Kevin Maroney kmaroney at crossover.com
Kitchen Staff Supervisor New York Review of Science Fiction
<http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/olp/nyrsf/nyrsf.html>

Michael Straight — 09 Sep 1997, 09:46 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

On Mon, 8 Sep 1997, Kevin J. Maroney wrote:

Anyway, I think it's pretty clear that the Outsider is both God and a burst blood-vessel in Silk's head.

Is there any evidence other than Crane's speculation that Silk burst a blood-vessel?

While it is true that the Outsider shows Silk many things that Silk could not possibly have know, remember always that _The Book of the Long Sun_ is a *composed* text, written by a human being, who wants to make it look like Silk had a real revelation.

Kind of like the Gospels. What I was trying to say in the post that caused Mantis to put my name on this thread is that I loved the way Wolfe presented a story with strong evidence that God exists, but then makes it clear that the story is narrated by people whose trustworthiness we need to evaluate for ourselves. Do we think Silk's story contains hagiography, or are Horn & Nettle giving us the facts as best they know them (and how well do they know them)? It seems to me that you have to take their story on faith in much the same way I take the Gospels on faith.

But then to have Wolfe say in an interview that the Outsider really is God is sort of like me having a vision from God telling me the Gospels are authentic. It might be nice if it happened in real life, but it kind of ruins the ambiguity for me when Wolfe does it, closing off interpretations that Wolfe had taken great pains to allow in the story itself.

Perhaps I can take Wolfe's comment to mean that *he* believes Horn and Nettle's (and Silk's) story, but that I need to decide for myself.

As for the title of this thread, I didn't really think I was disagreeing with Nutria so much as making a follow-up comment to something he said. I'm sorry if I came across as antagonistic.

-Rostrum

Kieran Cleary — 09 Sep 1997, 14:51 · follows Michael Straight

Anyway, I think it's pretty clear that the Outsider is both God and a burst blood-vessel in Silk's head.

Is there any evidence other than Crane's speculation that Silk burst a blood-vessel?

Well, as in Real Life, if someone has a vision or numinous experience, that can be interpreted as the de facto evidence that they "burst a blood vessel" or whatever. Of course, the believer will explain the experience in supernatural terms. The point is that the ambiguity can exist. In the Whorl, which is set in the same universe (or a similar cycle) as the Urth series, the ambiguity is less concrete. Basically, in the universe of the Whorl, we can take it that God exists, while in Real Life it's a moot point.

lasrach
