

holy alga-rhythm!

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 09 Sep 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/431>

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m.driussi — 09 Sep 1997, 21:30

Rostrum,

Of course I like the creative ambiguity of Wolfe's work, too. I mean, I actually enjoy looking at how in a certain reading Severian is closer to an Anti-Christ than he is to a Christ. That one (well this one at least) can easily entertain such a thought shows the degree of ambiguity at work. ("So, you intend this court to believe that you honestly mistook the Prince of Light for the Prince of Peace?" "Well, it was a dark room and I didn't have my glasses on . . . ")

And Nutria wants somebody from the "Gnostic camp," as it were, to explain to him how the Gnostic interpretation of THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN (which Nutria says he himself originally took to be the primary/privileged/whatever-you-wanna-call-it reading) holds up in light of the non-Gnostic, i.e., Catholic (in the subsets where Catholicism and Gnosticism have no intersection) reading which Nutria now believes to be the primary reading of the text.

If I may be so bold, I think that Nutria is very interested in how Gene Wolfe can be writing such material that seems so utterly non- or even almost anti-Catholic, yet this material turns out to be, under certain readings or interpretations, to be quite Catholic after all. (Unfortunately, as interesting as I myself find it to be, this sort of debate quickly becomes thorny and theological!)

(If alga could read Wright's essays then maybe she would be interested in arguing their point to Nutria--now =that= would be something!)

As for the author's interpretation of the art. We went through some of this before around here--I believe it was Talon who wrote that we shouldn't let Gene Wolfe's opinions alone divorce us from our favorite pet theories. I understand the notion and applaud it to a certain degree, but speaking for myself (the only person I'm nominally qualified to speak for) I do tend to give some weight to the author's opinion. Not god-like weight, no; maybe just twice as much as I'd give to a John Clute reading.

So what is my own reading like, an internalized consensus? Sometimes it is. For example, alga had pinned me down and gotten me to admit that Quetzal was certainly the vampire stalking Viron because he was the only vampire in the text and there was a lot of circumstantial evidence as well. I didn't =like= it, it felt somehow off, I kept watching for the slimmest of clues for other vampires, but I had to admit that she was right. Then Wolfe said there were others on board, and I was able to reclaim my original reading (which I had cravenly suppressed? <g>) while still admitting that alga was right.

In the other direction, I still find it hard to believe that the Marble/Mint merger was just the two typos Wolfe says it was. Even though I don't know what a Marble/Mint merger would mean, let alone how it could be done!

Not that I want to bring either the vampires or the Marble/Mint issues back up for discussion at this time--I don't! Just to show how I myself have dealt with them in my own muddled reading.

Wombat,

No, to the best of my knowledge Amazon.com does not sell magazines. Chris Drumm is a mail order bookseller specializing in genre material and he does carry magazines, especially small press. (He =does= carry some issues of NYRSF--catalog No. 106 lists: 17, 18, 19, 25, 47, and 74. How about "Foundation"? Doesn't look like it.) He has been working on a web-page for some time now. In the meantime, phone/fax 515-984-6749; e-mail cdrummbks at aol.com.

=mantis=

Jim Jordan — 11 Sep 1997, 00:13 · follows m.driussi

At 09:30 PM 9/9/97 GMT, Mantis wrote:

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My reason for reading it Catholicly is Wolfe's own statements to me in correspondence. He seemed shocked that I took it gnostically and saw Severian as another Number Five antichrist. Once again this raises the question of whether Wolfe is really being all that ambiguous, or if he scatters so many seeds and so few clues that he defeats his readers. I'm inclined to believe the latter, and I see it as a weakness in his writing at some points.

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Well, if Severian were an antichrist figure, it would still be Catholic fiction, but just "presenting" Catholicism by negation as it were. If the universe of the New Sun were a genuinely closed gnostic universe, it would just add another layer of interpretation. But from his comments in my interview with him, Wolfe did not (for instance) intend the use of "Yesod" and "Beriah" to indicate a fully Qabbalistic universe, but was just using them for "heaven" and "earth."

Nutria