

Comparative Religion

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 08 Oct 1999

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David_Lebling — 08 Oct 1999, 09:51

From: Paul C Duggan <pduggan at world.std.com>

<<What about the detail (IIRC) in the Long Sun that the religion of the Whorl "parodied" that of the state religion at the time of Typhon? Does that indicate a kind of connection to christianity ("sign of addition", minimally)?>>

If you look at the features of the Vironese faith, it has only a tenuous connection to Christianity. Some of its features compared to Christian ones:

--Vironism-- --Christianity--

polytheistic monotheistic

animal sacrifice no

human sacrifice (only recently abolished) no

reading of entrails no

theophany as major element no, but visions have been important confession and forgiveness

confession and forgiveness sign of cross sign of addition

Really, Vironism resembles nothing so much as the Roman religion, a syncretic popular religion based primarily on the original Roman polytheism, but open to any cult with a popular following. Had Christianity exhibited a willingness to sacrifice to the Emperor, it probably would have been absorbed into the Roman religious "marketplace." Popular Roman religious practice has to be distinguished from the state religion, which was conservative and focused more on the old (pre-Greek-borrowings) Italian (Latin? Etruscan?) deities, such as the Lares and Penates, the Bona Dea, and so on. In Viron, Jehovah (or is it Allah?) has been absorbed as the "Outsider."

The Romans as individuals were into Isis, Mithras, mystery cults, and so on, all of which were grafted onto the original pantheon. This is not unlike Hindu syncretism as well.

In any case, the religions of the Whorl appear to all be parodies of Urth (or rather, Earth) religions, sometimes with a sting or joke attached. Triviguante's religion and culture are parodies of Arab culture and religion with the sexes swapped, for example. The religion of Gaon (in On Blue's Waters) appears to be more-or-less a parody of Hinduism.

Pas/Typhon did this on purpose to divide the inhabitants of the Whorl.

In short, we can deduce little or nothing about the religion(s) of Urth from those of the Whorl.

-- Dave Lebling
(aka vizcacha)

Alex David Groce — 08 Oct 1999, 10:57 · follows David_Lebling

Although (ignoring Wolfe's purposes and attributing final reasoning to Typhon here) the fact that the parodies are as close as they are to religions we know suggests

that (as I think New Sun indicates) Urth's religions are descendants of Earth's religions.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

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Michael Straight — 08 Oct 1999, 11:10 · follows Alex David Groce

On Fri, 8 Oct 1999 David_Lebling at avid.com wrote:

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This touches on the difference I was trying to express between these two series. Does one get the feeling, reading the New Sun series, that even in Typhon's time anyone would remember enough of Arab culture to get the joke of switching the sexes?

The world the Whorl came from seems more closely connected to our time than Severian's world.

-Rostrum