

Science and Miracles

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Nov 1999

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Nicholas Gevers — 02 Nov 1999, 11:34

I agree with other parties to our debate that the ever-present possibility of scientific explanations for events enriches NEW SUN, lending it rigour, speculative depth, and metaphorical power. But as LONG SUN makes clear, it is sometimes the possibility of a miraculous explanation that is the most effective literary device in Wolfe's work. I think that Wolfe at times intentionally misleads his readers into byways of scientific explication, in effect challenging them to see the wood for the trees, the Word for the World; when they fail to find secular explanations, or contrive ones that are trivial and unsatisfactory, they must perforce acknowledge the supremacy of the miraculous.

Another point: a miraculous explanation for a textual incident doesn't entail capitulation to the intellectually slack fluffiness of genre Fantasy plotting. Wolfe intends us to understand supernatural events as ultimately purposeful Divine interventions or concessions, not as the random conjurings of elves and wizards.

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