

"The God and His Man" and The Book of the Short Sun

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 22 Dec 1999

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mark millman — 22 Dec 1999, 12:39

At 2:26 pm on Monday 13 December 1999, mantis wrote:
Furthermore: A51 might have some relevance to OBW;
Zed, although just a sketch, seems rather like Blue (and the adventures that narrator has there are rather like those that Man has on Zed).

And at 11:55 pm on Thursday 16 December 1999, William H. Ansley responded:

"Isid looo loooE" has long plagued me. . . . [I]t does look like the identifying number of a machine, a computer model number, for example. Certainly Isid looo loooE is an artificially intelligent computer (or something very much like one) as well as a god.

Double-trunked elephants are found on both Zed and Blue does. It is a pity that we are not told how many legs Zedian elephants have.

I took a look at "The God and His Man" this morning in my paperback copy of Endangered Species (it appears on page 203), and at the bottom of page 205, I found a reference to (I paraphrase), "great trees like islands, each with its own inhabitants" in the steaming lands. This suggests to me the little we heard about Green's enormous trees, and so I suspect that if the short story has relevance to OBW, it's because it relates to the entire BotSS, and that Zed represents the Blue-Green system (compressed by time and literary processes into a single planet). I confess that I have a hard time fitting the high, hot lands and the cold lands into this scheme, so maybe it's just the steaming lands that represent Blue and Green, and the other lands are freighted with other referents. Or, and perhaps more likely, this is another case of Wolfe returning to ideas and images that he's used before, expanding on them in the larger work. Certainly the computer-god in its spacecraft could go either way here.

By the way, Siegfried's magic cap in the Nibelungenlied is the Tarnhelm. In German, "Tarnung" could mean "a descendant of the family Tarn". Siegfried, of course, also had a magic sword.

Mark Millman