

Scylla & Oreb

The Urth list — 14 messages, 8 voices, 18 Apr 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3169>

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Andrew Bollen — 18 Apr 2002, 14:28

Forgive a newbie for rehashing old hash, but the archives are a bit chaotic on Scylla & Oreb. Is this a plausible reading:

Scylla possesses Oreb at the very beginning of NTLS, just as Silk is about sacrifice him (her?):
' "No, no," the night chough muttered, as it had in the market. And then, "Please, no." ... A last strangled half-human cry echoed ... and the wretched night chough went limp ...'

I think the possession happens between the (animal) "No, no", and the (downloaded Scylla) "Please, no." A small shift in the voice ("please" is *almost* multi-syllabic) marks an important transition in the story - a deft, Wolfean touch.

Stuffing Scylla into the Oreb's tiny brain brings the bird down. We know that the Window in the Manteion is semi-functional (Kypris mentions this to Silk at Orchid's), and that possession can take place without a visual manifestation.

Why does Scylla download herself into such a poor vessel - a bird about to be sacrificed?

Because she was in extremis, pursued by Pas, with no other choice (but then why not into one of the humans present? Dunno!).

Oreb recovers in Silk's absence. Some part of Scylla's fear (she is a terrified, pursued child, after all) causes Oreb to hide on top of cupboard, where Silk discovers him/her. Henceforward the bird, previously a terrified animal, becomes a companion with a personality - childlike in many ways.

Why does the repellant Scylla become likeable within Oreb? Because she is with Silk, who of course "brings out the best" in many repellant characters - Auk, Hyacinth, Pig etc - at least while he is with them. Horn's judgements of Scylla (perhaps she would grow out of it) and Oreb (a nasty, mangy creature) at the very end of the tale are germane.

The Scylla who possesses Chenille is a different proposition. I interpret this Scylla as a "backup" personality, cached before Pas' resurgence, and therefore unchastened and "un-Silked", seeking to return now to Mainfram to "reintegrate". Or do I have I crocked this up completely?

Roy C. Lackey — 18 Apr 2002, 18:37 · follows Andrew Bollen

Andrew asked:

----- This message has been truncated, as it exceeded the maximum size of 0k as specified by the system administrator. The sender of this message has been notified of the problem. -----

Roy C. Lackey — 19 Apr 2002, 09:11 · follows Roy C. Lackey

(Reposted from yesterday's urth list glitch)

Andrew asked:

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Scylla possessed Oreb when Silkhorn sacrificed at the Grand Manteion, just before being captured by Hari Mau (RTTW, 356). That is why Oreb disappeared for almost a year after Silkhorn was brought to Gaon--Scylla was looking for a glass so she could be uploaded again, lest she be trapped in Oreb.

-Roy

Phoebe Davis — 19 Apr 2002, 16:17 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Warning - Another newbie to the list! I am rereading the Severian, LS, and SS books for the first time since their publication. I started reading Wolfe when Shadow came out in mass market. I owned aOreb has long intrigued me. I'm about to finish Exodus and I remembered from my first reading just how much I wanted to know what a night chough looked like. Nigel might be familiar with them. ApolgiPhoebe

"Roy C. Lackey" <rlackey at stic.net> wrote: (Reposted from yesterday's urth list glitch)

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-Roy

Phoebe Davis — 19 Apr 2002, 16:20 · follows Phoebe Davis

I tried to put in too much info - this is pretty garbled. Here's what I said about Oreb after cutting out more words. I hope it works this time. Apologies all round. I'm about to finish Exodus andt much in common btw Syclla and Arthur but there it is.

Phoebe Davis <meezer_gal at yahoo.com> wrote:

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"Roy C. Lackey" <rlackey at stic.net> wrote: (Reposted from yesterday's urth list glitch)

Andrew asked:

Forgive a newbie for rehashing Yahoo! Tax Center - online filing with TurboTax

Phoebe Davis — 19 Apr 2002, 16:22 · follows Phoebe Davis

Drat! Will recheck my settings and possibly try again another day.

Phoebe Davis <meezer_gal at yahoo.com> wrote:

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Andrew asked:

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Phoebe Davis — 19 Apr 2002, 18:31 · follows Phoebe Davis

My profound thanks to William Ansley who helped me set up my Yahoo account properly. Here's my post - its been tested successfully.

I am rereading the Severian, LS, and SS books for the first time since their publication. I started reading Wolfe when Shadow came out in mass market and went on to purchase that and all his books since, and most before, in first editions. I owned a SF & Mystery bookstore in Richmond, VA for 6 years (1988 - 1994) and Gene came twice to meet local fans and sign books. From my experience, Gene is a scholar and a gentleman. If he calls himself difficult, I think better to agree with an earlier posting that he does not suffer fools gladly. I took Gene and Rosemary out to dinner each time they visited and could not have asked for a better conversationalist or guests.

Authorial behavior at cons or not often seems inexplicable and can be confrontational. No one would be surprised at anything Ellison did at this point in his life after all. Brilliant people are not usually easy people. I can't imagine there is any author who has not managed, at the same con, to piss off one fan and delight another.

Oreb has long intrigued me. I'm about to finish Exodus and I remembered from my first reading just how much I wanted to know what a night chough looked like. Nigel (and other brits on this list) might be familiar with them. Apologies if this has been covered, but last night I went searching for choughs and found more than I bargained for. This is the best picture I found <http://www.fishing-in-wales.com/wildlife/birds/chough.htm>. They are in the crow - or corvid -family. I discovered that the chough (pronouced chuff)is a protected species in Wales because the soul of King Arthur migrated into a chough at his death. I don't believe that Wolfe does anything by accident and must be aware of that legend. I had not previously considered Wolfe's book in light of the Arthurian cycle but the connections are obvious. Fisher King/Sleeping King - Severian, Syclla's possession of Oreb - migration of the soul into a chough. I'm sure you all will think of many more - or shoot this down of course. Can't say I see that much in common btw Syclla and Arthur but there it is.

Phoebe

(Hi David!)

--- "Roy C. Lackey" <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:
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-Roy

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Andy Robertson — 19 Apr 2002, 19:06 · follows Phoebe Davis

----- Original Message -----

From: "Phoebe Davis" <meezer_gal at yahoo.com>
<http://www.fishing-in-wales.com/wildlife/birds/chough.htm>. They are in the crow - or corvid -family. I discovered that the chough (pronounced chuff) is a protected species in Wales because the soul of King Arthur migrated into a chough at his death. I don't believe that Wolfe does anything by accident and must be aware of that legend.

The transmigration of the soul is a familiar theme in Celtic legend, certainly.

I did note that the one element of the Briah cycle which does *not* fit in with neo-Catholic ideas is the frequent transfer of human identity.

In the Bible there is the "possession" of humans by indwelling demons or angelic forces, but the idea that a human soul could shift from body to body is not found.

hartshorn

James Jordan — 19 Apr 2002, 19:29 · follows Andy Robertson

At 02:06 PM 4/19/2002, you wrote:

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hartshorn

Quite true, literally. But "mystically" the Communion unites believers not only with Christ but with one another, and even with the saints in heaven. Wolfe simply makes the "symbolic" into the "literal" in the Briah books. Severian literally drowns and comes back to life in his baptisms. People literally eat each other and participate in each other's memories. Wolfe is "getting at" Christian notions, but is doing so by making them "literal."

And also, I suppose it depends on how much of a traditional transsubstantiationist Wolfe is.

Traditional RC theology is fairly "literalistic" in its view of Communion: the outward "accidents"

remain bread and wine, but the inward "substance" is "really" (in the philosophical sense) the actual flesh and blood of Jesus Christ extended through space "into" the bread and wine. If Wolfe is traditionalistic on this point, then his use cannibalism and of identity transfer in the BriaH books is even closer to his brand of Christianity than it would be to, say, mine, or to many modern Catholic theologians.

Anyway, all this stuff in the BriaH books is metaphorical for symbolic (in some senses) Christian notions, not a nod toward literal Hindu ones.

Nutria

tom — 19 Apr 2002, 20:58 · follows James Jordan

Andy Robertson writes:

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Matt 16:13-17 seem to address the issue. It appears that Jews of the time believed in some sort of soul-type transmigration, or something pretty darn weird. And apparently Jesus does, too, as he praises Simon for getting it right, since doing so requires some sort of divine assistance. So it looks like the idea of the same soulish thing moving from one incarnation to another is not anti - or even extra-Biblical.

hartshorn

Tom

Alice K. Turner — 20 Apr 2002, 07:13 · follows tom

From: "tom" <tom at bitterman.net>

Andy Robertson writes:

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This is a Pharisees vs. Saducees question, a big Jewish division in the first century which had a major effect on forming Christianity's doctrines. Briefly, the Pharisees, the sort of reform Jewish party, had been picking up ideas from the East (the reason that Matthew puts the Persian Magi--wise men or magicians--into his fantasy of the Conciliator's birth) and also the West, the grain cults of Isis-Osiris and Demeter-Persephone (and you could add Naomi-Ruth if you want to

annoy people, as I often do). These had much to do with life after death, and (I gather) there was at the time some question as to whether this would be sequential (a la Hindu) or permanent. The conservative Saducee party together with every orthodox (small o) Jewish party for the last two millennia has rejected both speculations. Jesus, a sort of New Ager of the time, does seem to lean along Pharisee lines especially in this passage. But you have to consider Matthew's own outlook. He is frequently lumped with Mark and Luke, but I think he is very much his own man, a real wild man with regard to eschatology, and certainly a Pharisee with an ax to grind.

-alga

matthew.malthouse — 22 Apr 2002, 07:41 · follows Alice K. Turner

On 19/04/2002 19:31:54 Phoebe Davis wrote:

<http://www.fishing-in-wales.com/wildlife/birds/chough.htm>. They are in the crow - or corvid -family. I discovered that the chough (pronounced chuff) is a protected species in Wales because the soul of King Arthur migrated into a chough at his death.

We may hang on to our traditions with unwonted tenacity and excessive sentiment upon occasion but the real reason the Chough is a protected species is 'cause there ain't that many of 'em left. ;-)

Matthew

Phoebe Davis — 22 Apr 2002, 15:30 · follows matthew.malthouse

The statement seems to imply that Choughs were protected before a drop in population was noted - which would certainly be delightful if true. Certainly more romantic than practical as you suggest. Although I can think of one instance of a non threatened species being protected for religious reasons... not that I want to trample on anyone's sacred cows of course.

Phoebe

--- matthew.malthouse at guardian.co.uk wrote:

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Matthew

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matthew.malthouse — 22 Apr 2002, 15:37 · follows Phoebe Davis

On 22/04/2002 16:30:32 Phoebe Davis wrote:
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anyone's sacred cows of course.

No risk. All the cows here being mad. ;-)

M