

Baptising the Little Gods

The Urth list — 5 messages, 2 voices, 19 Apr 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3175>

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Andy Robertson — 19 Apr 2002, 19:59

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

From: "James Jordan" <jbjordan4 at cox.net>
Anyway, all this stuff in the Briah books is metaphorical for
symbolic (in some senses) Christian notions, not a nod toward literal
Hindu
ones.

But Catholicism is full of nods toward "literal Hindu" ideas.

But I should not say "Hindu", but rather "Indo-European" - since the legend stream that gave us the Norse and Celtic gods has a common root with the one that gave rise to Hinduism.

One of these "nods" is of course the resurgent Mother Goddess, Mary.

Another is the bubbling profusion of Little Gods - who in Catholicism are called Saints.

Another is the whole Matter of Arthur, and its cognate legends in other European cultures.

Catholicism is (at least in human terms) a fusion of the monotheistic/judaistic root meme that arose in the eastern mediterranean with these older ideas, from North/Central Asia.

As Christianity migrated away from its jewish roots and migrated north into Europe it accreted these old patterns of belief and thought and Christianised them - or, if you are a believer, you may chose to say it made them Holy.

(I am urgent that you should not see this post as an attack on your religion, for it is not. Though I am an athiest, I was Christian once, and I believe that only those who love the Christian religion can truely understand Wolfe).

The Briah cycle is profoundly about Little Gods, and the way their false godhood becomes a friend and figure of the True god.

It bears repeatedly on the process by which humans become Little Gods - as Pas did, as Severian did, as Silk did, and as (we might say) - and, even more, and even more puzzlingly, it bears on the truely divine process of
making that holy.

I put it to you that this process is at the roots of Catholicism.

hartshorn

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 19 Apr 2002, 19:55 · follows Andy Robertson

Wow.

Hartshorn said:

The Briah cycle is profoundly about Little Gods, and the way their false godhood becomes a friend and figure of the True god.

It bears repeatedly on the process by which humans become Little Gods - as Pas did, as Severian did, as Silk did, and as (we might say) - and, even more, and even more puzzlingly, it bears on the truly divine process of *making that holy*.

Yes, this is very clearly one thing these books deal with (and 5HC doesn't, which is a strike against its inclusion).

I put it to you that this process is at the roots of Catholicism.

Now, there I (as Wolfe's fellow-Catholic) have to demur. That the Catholic Church uses such "accretional" methods to baptize what is good in local cultures and religions into Catholicism, there is no doubt; that some of the saints (like Brigid, alas!) are probably legendary figures made out of local deities, I will agree. If I recall correctly, an effort was made in the '60s to "purge" at least some of the more clearly fictitious saints from the list.

But.

The Saints are not "little gods"; catholics are forbidden to worship them in any way. They -- the real ones, at least, if not those who are based on older legends -- are servants of God. They are "one with" us by the "Communion of Saints," the unity that Christ prays for His church to possess (see John's account of the Last Supper); they are believed to intercede for us with God, not by any power of their own, but the same way that Christians alive today pray for each other. (The practice commonly referred to "praying to saints" is really asking the saints to pray for us.)

And, most importantly, they are not saints because of their own egotistical attempts to elevate themselves to Godhood, but because of their devotion to something beyond their own egos.

Typhon-Pas is an

anti-Saint; rather than being elevated for his submission to God, he refuses to submit to anything and elevates himself to false Godhead.

--Dan'I

Andy Robertson — 19 Apr 2002, 23:31 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

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

From: "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>

And, most importantly, they are not saints because of their own egotistical attempts to elevate themselves to Godhood, but because of their devotion to something beyond their own egos. Typhon-Pas is an anti-Saint; rather than being elevated for his submission to God, he refuses to submit to anything and elevates himself to false Godhead.

Yes. But don't be defensive. I am not attacking.

What is Wolfe saying? Does not Wolfe's fiction accept and transform the "little gods" - and perhaps accept that as the universe ages its greater children will be more and more tempted to this status, and need this redemption?

You may find this a threat, but does Wolfe, who is so wise?

God might work this way. ****really****. In the objective, primary, world.

That is what Wolfe is writing about, after all.

hartshorn

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 19 Apr 2002, 23:22 · follows Andy Robertson

hartshorn wrote:

Yes. But don't be defensive. I am not attacking.

Sorry. On another list I'm dealing with a serious anti-Catholic who seems to think that Jack Chick tracts are Revealed Truth. A bit of the defensiveness seems to have slipped across to here.

What is Wolfe saying? Does not Wolfe's fiction accept and transform the "little gods" - and perhaps accept that as the universe ages its greater children will be more and more tempted to this status, and need this redemption?

Yeah. And one of the things I've been thinking, but need to reread it first, is that one-of-the-many-things-Long-Sun-is, is a story of the redemption of Typhon/Pas. Or maybe not...

You may find this a threat, but does Wolfe, who is so wise?

I suspect he'd get very upset if you called him wise. 8*)

God might work this way. ****really****. In the objective, primary, world.

Might, heck. If God can make use of scum like me and, doubtless, Gene Wolfe, he can make use of somebody like Typhon. (Or, as Eru says to Melkor, "this, too, shall result in the greater glory of my work." Or something like that. I hate having a lousy memory for quotations...)

Andy Robertson — 20 Apr 2002, 17:41 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

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

From: "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>

(Or, as Eru

says to Melkor, "this, too, shall result in the greater glory of my work." Or something like that. I hate having a lousy memory for quotations...)

As you note, it was Tolkien who started this game, with his Ainur: but Wolfe approaches it from the other end. Pas and his family are the very pattern of the brawling, horny, quarreling, pagan gods of Greece, Rome, or the Northlands, not JRRT's attenuated bunch of thumb-sitters.

hartshorn