

Blue is Hell!

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 23 May 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3276>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Adam Stephanides — 23 May 2002, 14:30

When I read alga's statement that the inhumani were demons, my first thought was Green = Hell, Blue = Purgatory, Whorl = Heaven. (I'm sure this must have been mentioned before.) But on second thought, I saw a few problems with this schema. For one thing, I'm pretty sure there aren't supposed to be any demons in Purgatory, even just visiting. For another, Purgatory is a temporary abode for souls, but the Bluvians aren't going anywhere: even if they repair more landers, once the Whorl has left they have no prospect of interstellar flight. Finally, the Whorl, with its decaying infrastructure and civic unrest is hardly heavenly.

So it occurred to me: if the inhumani are demons, perhaps Blue and Green are both Hell, with Blue being the upper circles and Green the lower circles, so to speak. On this reading, Silk's coming to and departure from Blue would correspond to the Harrowing of Hell, when Christ after his resurrection descended to Hell and brought some Old Testament figures, who had all been in Hell up to that point, up to Heaven. So Silk's companions on the boat would be those worthy of being saved. (Seawrack's presence seems incongruous from this perspective, but Dante, at least, put Eve in Heaven.) And poor Hide, Hoof, Daisy and Vadsig would be damned, along with the rest of the Bluvians.

How's that for a depressing reading?

--Adam

Alice K. Turner — 23 May 2002, 21:38 · follows Adam Stephanides

No, Adam, I don't think Blue and Green are Hell or Purgatory. I think Wolfe contemplated a "what if?" pair of worlds where mythological spirits and personages that Catholics are still taught to believe in are real, and colonizing humans must cope as best they can. Having come up with Quetzal and his ilk (he may not yet have thought of the ilk when he first limned Quetzal, a terrific character), he then devised angel figures, the Neighbors (and in the Bible, too, angels are much more elusive creatures than demons), and a saint struggling literally with his own humanity but also able to perform miracles. Now let's see, how can I (Wolfe) put this into sfal terms? It's a good concept and on that level not a bad working-out; throw in the Mother as Rahab, or Tiamat left over from an older religion, and Seawrack from legend--a terrible temptation to sin in spite of herself. (Or is she cannier than we know?)

Adam, I agree with you about the slap-dashery of these books, and have said so before. (Of the three, IGJ was the one I liked best when first reading it.) But the reason I'll stick with my Biblical reading is that for me it works. Catholic mythology--doctrine, I guess, they call it--explains a lot of things here. Some (not all) of the mess comes from the attempt to tie the whole huge machine of 11 books in three series conceived at different times for different reasons together. It's like Windows!

-alga