

second stories

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 24 Dec 2002

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maa32 — 24 Dec 2002, 17:56

I was looking through the second round of stories told In Green's Jungles. I was hit by several possible allegorical interpretations - I don't know how many of you buy Wolfe's stories as metonymies for the larger narrative. I believe it - as I believe that the story of the suitors looking for the golden ring in Citadel of the Autarch allegorizes Severian, Baldanders, and the androgyne and their attempts to be the candidates for the New Sun. Here goes:

The first story concerns a storm strega (Chapter 7). She gets a man to clean out her chimney, then she gets mad and sends a storm, stuffing a woman up another man's chimney. Here we have two chimneys - one being cleaned out by a slave, the other being stuffed by a vengeful witch. To clean out the second chimney, they drop tinderwood down it. In the Short Sun books, we have the story of the Mother, a powerful Strega, on a flooded world. Later, the neighbor Windcloud talks of humanity as a bunch of birds temporarily staying on his chimney. The planet blue is his chimney. Replacing these terms, we can see the Strega as the Mother, trying to procure a slave who is enamored of her (as Horn is enamored of Seawrack) in order to put him to work to do something of planetary importance. Has she flooded the planet to make a home for herself? She is the "divinity" of winds and storms, isn't she?

The allegorical interpretation I place on the second story is important to me.

Listen to the intro: "Once very long ago, there were two little girls whose houses were only a few steps apart, but were far from any other houses at all." One little girl was good, the other was a liar and a cheat. The girls played together, grew larger, and got closer. Then "a little settlement that was nowhere near them grew to a town and broke out in politics". Then war threatens. Look at the description of blue and green in the front of the book: one is "better", one is "worse". They are close together. And the other planets are farther out. A "town" has recently broken out in politics - namely, the long sun whorl. Now notice the inversion at the end of the story

- the bad girl is revealed to be MORA, not Fava, even though that is what we expect from the story. I believe this represents the switch that Wolfe has pulled - we expect Blue to be Urth (if we buy into that) because all the details fit from the story - but the revelation of which world is the "bad one" is surprising (if we believe Urth is Green).

Also, I believe that the drama enacted by Horn on Green to clean the sewer is a passion play past down to tell the story of Severian, a cultural and world myth. Notice that it is told in the third person.

Just some comments about those stories - I'm sure they are important, whether you buy my interpretations or not.

Marc Aramini