

Silkhorn's mission after BotSS

The Urth list — 5 messages, 4 voices, 05 Oct 2004

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Christopher Culver — 05 Oct 2004, 09:03

The relatively-new CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO SCIENCE FICTION includes an essay which dedicates about a page and a half to Wolfe's solar works. The overview isn't terribly in-depth, but I found it most interesting that the writer sees Silk as going on to become "a fisher of men" among the stars at the end of the Book of the Short Sun.

This changed my view of the ending of the BotSS entirely. I originally thought it was an inexplicable and cruel abandoning of Blue by Silkhorn after saving some of his buddies from it (as in the traditional belief of the Harrowing of Hell). Now, however, I can see that perhaps Wolfe wanted it to be an optimistic finale in which worship of the Outsider will spread all over the universe.

Sure, Blue is abandoned by Silkhorn himself, but there are still those who knew Silk, or read Horn's book, so they know of the Outsider, and monotheism might continue on, especially if (as Wolfe's Catholic faith would have it) the Holy Spirit continues its work eternally.

Does the idea of Silk as galactic bringer of good news make anyone else appreciate the ending of BotSS more?

Christopher Culver

James Wynn — 05 Oct 2004, 10:12 · in reply to Christopher Culver

Christopher Culver:

Does the idea of Silk as galactic bringer of good news make anyone else appreciate the ending of BotSS more?

Hmmm.. Who will he take the "good news" too? The Neighbors and Inhumani hardly needed whatever theological messages the Short Sun Narrator had to offer.

Rather becoming a mere foil for the Whorl pantheon (which in fact, the Whorl cannot live without - they're are modules of the Mainframe) it seemed to me that the characters who return are supposed to "heal" the pantheon in some way (I don't now exactly how). After all, Pas was almost rubbed by his wife and at least three children. He returns in pieces really -- and is it likely he's yet entirely whole? Then he proceeds to erase Echidna, Scylla, Molpe, and Hierax. Who returns to the Whorl? Silk, Nettle, Seawrack, Marble, and Oreb. A nearly perfect analogy of the damaged gods (I grant that Nettle is a bit of a wedge-job).

Naturally, Silk's goal would be have the pantheon and their worshipers recognize the pre-eminence of the Outsider.

You are probably right about where the Whorl is going, however. It seems obvious to me after a year of reflection that the ship was always expected to continue on from star to star. Otherwise, what would happen to all the "non-Cargo" on the ship? Wolfe has said there will be no more

sequels to the Silk segment, but I think it would be very interesting to see a couple stories on the crew of the Whorl.

~ Crush

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 05 Oct 2004, 10:17 · in reply to James Wynn

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Ummmm ... perhaps this is a literal reading of "In my Father's house there are many mansions."

www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer

No president who has presided over Abu Ghraib should ever say he wants to put anyone on a leash. That's all.

--Andrew Sullivan

James Wynn — 05 Oct 2004, 10:38 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

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Why not? But if so, the planets Neighbors and Inhumani do not strike me as obvious exemplars of the missionary field that the Short Sun Narrator is supposed to evangelize. We know nothing of the religion of the Neighbors (it does not seem likely to me that Mother was an object of worship) and if they were converted to the worship of the Outsider (the Narrator excluded) it is not so stated in the text AFAIK.

~ Crush

"We sleep safe in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm."
- George Orwell

Chris — 05 Oct 2004, 12:36 · follows James Wynn

I always thought of his leaving as a way to ensure that the man/messenger didn't eclipse the message. He was back, really, to plant a seed more than to fix all of Blue's problems himself. So I didn't really get that negative connotation in the first place.

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