

urth-urth.net Digest, Vol 6, Issue 13

The Urth list — 7 messages, 5 voices, 08 Feb 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4364>

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Taylor Peter — 08 Feb 2005, 12:52

Hi - I'm new to the list; I found your allusion to "Wolfe's theory regarding the pagan gods" very interesting. I believe Wolfe explores this quite a bit in the Urth/Long/Short Sun series as well - would anyone care to elaborate on it?

Thanks

-Peter

Message: 8

Date: Tue, 08 Feb 2005 16:27:16 +0000

From: "Andy Robertson" <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk>

Subject: Re: (urth) The Wizard - Bright shadows & Empty Infernos

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth-urth.net at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <E1CyYCq-000OKw-BL at oceanus.uk.clara.net>

Content-Type: text/plain; format=flowed; charset="iso-8859-1"

It struck me as intriguing how the Overcyn appeared while Able was wearing the helmet. Further hints of Wolfe's theory regarding the pagan gods?

I think so. I've tried to think of a less obvious explanation but none presents itself.

James Wynn — 08 Feb 2005, 13:24 · in reply to Taylor Peter

It struck me as intriguing how the Overcyn appeared while Able was wearing the helmet. Further hints of Wolfe's theory regarding the pagan gods?

I assume you are talking about Valfather appearing as "a bright shadow"? Very Platonic. Perhaps it is a Scholastic view of the gods?

David Lebling — 08 Feb 2005, 13:26 · in reply to Taylor Peter

My recollection is that Wolfe has stated that the pagan gods actually existed, and were in effect, demons. This is, I think, a conservative but orthodox position within the Catholic Church.

On the other hand, the Overcyns don't appear to be demons, and appearing as a blaze of light when viewed with the Helmet of True Seeing (sorry, too much D&D in my youth) seems more to

indicate that they are godlike rather than demonic.

Wolfe's conception of the worlds in Wizard Knight is that each is made of the leftovers of the one higher up, which to my mind would indicate that the Overcyns are godlike but not as godlike as (e.g.) Michael, and still less godlike than the Highest God.

So in short, I think that Wolfe's thinking on the matter (at least as expressed in his fiction) has refined itself since his comments about the pagan gods, which I believe were contemporaneous with *_Soldier in the Mist_*. Of course, the Overcyns also seem to be somewhat nicer than the Greek gods, and nicer than the actual Norse pantheon.

-- Dave Lebling, aka vizcacha

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

From: "Taylor Peter" <taylor_peter at bah.com>

Hi - I'm new to the list; I found your allusion to "Wolfe's theory regarding the pagan gods" very interesting. I believe Wolfe explores this quite a bit in the Urth/Long/Short Sun series as well - would anyone care to elaborate on it?

Thanks

-Peter

Andy Robertson — 08 Feb 2005, 13:32 · in reply to Taylor Peter

Taylor Peter writes:

Hi - I'm new to the list; I found your allusion to "Wolfe's theory regarding the pagan gods" very interesting. I believe Wolfe explores this quite a bit in the Urth/Long/Short Sun series as well - would anyone care to elaborate on it?

It's the pattern of the universe as diagrammed in the WIZARD KNIGHT.

Wolfe imagines the "pagan gods" as being of a lower order of being than the One god, but still divine.

Yet he imagines also there is one perfect god over all.

I don't know if he literally believes this (I doubt so) or if it's a writer's construct.

The idea has many literary and historical sources, but the most important recent one is probably Tolkien and his EA / Valar / Maiar who act in ways very like the One God / Kleos / Overcyns

In a literary sense it's a nod to the origins of European Catholicism (and hence our whole Western culture) as syncretised Christianised paganism

James Wynn — 08 Feb 2005, 13:36 · in reply to David Lebling

My recollection is that Wolfe has stated that the pagan gods actually existed, and were in effect, demons. This is, I think, a conservative but orthodox position within the Catholic Church.

I think it was the Apostle Paul who suggested that the pagan gods were demons. In the only quote I know of about this, Wolfe said he believed that they existed but the only mistake was in worshipping them. I haven't rechecked the quote but I don't think he elaborated more except to say his ideas were contrary to the RCC.

So in short, I think that Wolfe's thinking on the matter (at least as expressed in his fiction) has refined itself since his comments about the pagan gods, which I believe were contemporaneous with *Soldier in the Mist*.

Of course, the Overcyns also seem to be somewhat nicer than the Greek gods, and nicer than the actual Norse pantheon.

Weren't the gods in the Soldier novels at least as god-like as the Overcyns? Now the gods of the Whorl-- **they** were demons.

~ Crush

Iorwerth Thomas — 09 Feb 2005, 06:49 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <thewynns at earthlink.net>

I assume you are talking about Valfather appearing as "a bright shadow"? Very Platonic. Perhaps it is a Scholastic view of the gods?

Yeah, that's what I was thinking. But how does the Lothar/Loki fit into that? Maybe as an expression of the One's (more Neoplatonic than Platonic here; oh well) more playful (thus apparently capricious) side?

Iorwerth

James Wynn — 09 Feb 2005, 08:21 · in reply to Iorwerth Thomas

I assume you are talking about Valfather appearing as "a bright shadow"? Very Platonic. Perhaps it is a Scholastic view of the gods?

Yeah, that's what I was thinking. But how does the Lothar/Loki fit into that? Maybe as an expression of the One's (more Neoplatonic than Platonic here; oh well) more playful (thus apparently capricious) side?

Well, I don't think we ever saw Lothur. Who knows what he would have looked like to Able? Lothur's origin in Wolfe's world is as confused as it is in Norse mythology. In *THE WIZARD* is called Valfather's youngest son, but some say he was among those who came from Skai. In Norse mythology Loki also sometimes seems to be Odin by another name or an even a much older god.

In *THE WIZARD* universe, there is evil because TMHG wants them to be different from himself, and for that to be, they must be wrong in some way. Perhaps Lothur is just **more** different than the other Overcyn.

I think Lothur's mysteriousness in *THE WIZARD* probably reflects Wolfe's own ambivalence regarding his nature and the ultimate value of myth. I mean, just because Wolfe believes the pagan gods were "real", doesn't mean he accepts the stories about them as objectively true.

~ Crush