

Severian's virtue

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 09 Aug 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4686>

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b sharp — 09 Aug 2006, 16:17

Sorry for this flurry of posts, but I can't resist responding right away to Roy's Apheta-Bug (aphid?)post, which made me laugh out loud. Okay, fine, she is larva, she lights like a glow-worm when she is ready to mate, she lives in a spiral burrow, she has a stump tongue. I still won't "scruple to call her human" until I see six limbs and copper based blood :-)).

Discussing my theory that Severian's family is contaminated by alien/pagan god interbreeding, Roy asks:

If this is true, how is Severian as Conciliator/New Sun an improvement, analogous to a righteous >Noah? He went to Yesod and fathered a New Sun --who was/is himself. (URTH, 145)

You can't get much more incestuous than that. Further, he fathered himself on an insect from >another universe, who was the larval stage of a god-like, angelic being. How is that any better than Adam's tribe and the "Nephilim"? I would think it even worse, because the Hierogrammates were man-made to begin with.

and asks:

Wherever did you get the idea that the marriage was celibate?

First, you've mixed my analogies. It was the sailors, landed on Urth on flood day, who were analogous to Noah's family, repopulating a flooded Earth, not Severian. Note the Hieros, er.. Hierarchs were careful to ensure the crew going with Severian to Yesod were all Urth born.

Second, I take the whole star-spurting, self-conceiving orgasm Sev has with Apheta much less literally than you. I don't take it to mean he "fathered himself" but rather that from that union a new (and temporary) aspect of himself was created, the blue star/white fountain. The HHH's, knowing Severian's flaws, found a very appropriate way to create his nascent source of power. Anyway, Roy I thought you were firmly against the possibility of conception resulting from the mating of a human with any non-human in BotNS.

Third, I think Severian is (and was written to be) a notably flawed character. Not genetically worthy of re-populating Ushas anyway. Not worthy of reproducing at all, even after 10 years of marriage to Valeria. My light conjecture on celibate marriage stems from this but isn't very crucial to my overall theory. If they did have sex, did Sev use a condom for 10 years? Did Valeria use cacogen hormone pills? Was Sev sterile? The celibacy explanation retains the historical and religious tone of BotNS better, for me. Moreover, Valeria has children with her second husband, Dux Caesidus, right? (books not here)

I think previous posts have discussed the virtues Severian might have which qualify him for his special status. So, I'll take a different, perhaps irreverent approach and suggest this is a bit of auctorial narcissism. This narcissism (which I don't condemn, and in fact roundly appreciate) inspires Gene Wolfe to put his own books on the shelf next to Vernor Vinge's in 5HoC and (I think) inspires him to put his own face on the funeral bronze in Sev's mausoleum (cameo

appearance, right?) and inspires him to put wolves into various places in his stories. I think this same narcissism allows him to create in his own literary avatar, Severian, a morally flawed person whose redeeming qualities still make him worthy of demi-god status.

Of course, I should be careful in addressing such thoughts to Roy/Lackey, our King/Servant who has yet to deny he really is Gene Wolfe ;-).

-bsharp