

Eidolons/Aquastors

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m.driussi — 16 Apr 1998, 22:03

Reply: Item #1149260 from URTH at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET02#

Mark Millman,

FWIW I agree with you 100 percent. Wolfe uses (or seems to use) "aquastor" and "eidolon" interchangeably. However, at times in the past when I was trying to ferret out the different forms of "ghosts" involved (i.e., hairsplitting) I leaned on "aquastor" as being (1) machine generated (as opposed to biological mind generated), (2) having physical presence; leaving "eidolons" to be the (1) non-physical, beamed directly into the brain, seen by nobody else forms. (In part I derived this from the essentially guardian angel "individual companion/guides that nobody else can see" machine generated ghosts of Cyriaca's tale [leading up to the founding of the Library of Nessus].)

(I don't think that Severian on Tzadkiel was brought back as a beamed-into-the-brain ghost, because I can't imagine whose brain would be beamed-into in this case . . . Zak? Seems circular and redundant. I agree that he was a spirit that became more physical the more he ate and the more time he spent in existence--kind of like the phantom bowmen of Barsoom for sfnal reference, and the underworld shades drinking blood to work up enough energy to slap and tickle, answer questions, that sort of thing, in classical mythology.)

Crossing texts can lead to implosion, of course, but in the Soldier series we have the case where ghosts/gods invisible to others yet seen by Latro =become= visible to others if he touches them. To the way of thinking outlined above, this would be a case of an "eidolon" being converted into an "aquastor" or at least (if physical existence is more vaporous) a visible specter. (The vocabulary we need for such fine detail would be a lexicon for spiritualists, mediums, and ghost hunters.)

If the ghost-made-physical is the product of a biological mind (for example, the Son of the Student in that tale), it is (or can be and has been) properly termed a "tulpas," as Wolfe knows (see "Melting" in CASTLE OF DAYS or GENE WOLFE'S BOOK OF DAYS), yet he choses not to use this term in the Urth Cycle.

These are all creatures along the same spectrum. How we provisionally define (and diferentiate from each other) ghost, phantom, invisible stalker, wight, wraith, etc., depends entirely upon the context in which we find them sharing the landscape (unless we are ghost hunters or whatever). (I find it interesting that "ghost animated armor," a recognizable gothic ghost-type, is a role taken in URTH OF THE NEW SUN by Sidero and his class of android sailors--yet there is no ghostliness about that particular ghost-in- the-machine; it is "just a robot"!)

And again, I agree that the difference between a beamed-into-the-brain ghost and a temporarily physical ghost is probably only a difference in energy consumed (say 1.5 volts for the first, 3 volts for the second), and there is precious little difference between these "machine generated" critters and an autonomous spirit (like Jonas's spirit or the phantom

Cat).

Re: aquastors as agents of Yesodic governors. This is interesting and leads to wondering about how, exactly, Yesod governs all of Briah; most specifically, how Yesod governs the solar system of Urth and Urth itself. Because it seems clear (to me, at least) that Yesod is keeping probationary control over Briah . . . hence the need for the Autarchial Test in Yesod, to lift the probation. But the control that Yesod exerts is not open, rather it is hidden by veils of misinformation (the hierodules would rather be seen/feared as cacogen "demons" rather than worshipped/relied upon as extrasolarian "angels," for example . . . rather like the thinking engines of Cyriaca's tale, again).

There is what =might= be a hint in the one line: "Such rituals are divided into seven orders according to their importance, or as the heptarchs say, their `transcendence'" (IV, ch. 28). The "heptarchs" referred to might very well be the planetary and stellar Yesodic viceroys controlling the key worlds (i.e., Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn) of the Urth system; or they might just be some much more Urthly wandering mystics (who only come to the attention of a fully initiated autarch preparing to take the journey to Yesod--i.e., the "Lamed Wufniks" of Borges's BOOK OF IMAGINARY BEINGS).

Finally, the issue of dreams in TBOTNS turns out to be, as usual, much more open to interpretation than I originally thought. For example, I thought it was perfectly clear that on the night in which Severian and Baldanders share a bed they accidentally share dreams, or more specifically, they trade dreams--that is: Severian has the dream of undines that propells Baldanders; Baldanders has the dream of the Matachin Tower that propells Severian. (Whether agents actively beam one or both of these dreams is an open question; whether Severian's special mind drags mundane mortals into the corridors of time, vortex style, is another similar issue as well.)

However, Peter Wright finds this reading to be impossible--there is no sharing of dreamspace and no crossing of messages in these corridors of time episodes. (To me this seems like a strong veer towards Solipsism.) Baldanders's "horror" at the Matachin dream is, to Wright, a polite fiction--since Baldanders really =does= have a tower more terrible than the Matachin, a fact which doesn't seem to bother Baldy in the slightest. (So I try to argue that this =bolsters= the dream swapping argument--since Severian really is bothered by the Matachin reality, his dream would reflect this horror, even if the dream was shown in the Baldanders dream theater.)

Anyway.

=mantis=