

CLAW: Ancient Salute + Green + Creature of the Present

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Sep 2009

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sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org — 11 Sep 2009, 16:34

Before Severian branded Morwenna in CLAW Chapter IV, he "lifted his arms in the ancient salute".

What do you suppose this "ancient salute" looks like?
just curious....

Hi. I haven't had a chance to geek out on the list in a while. I just picked up CLAW again and falling in love with this work all over again. my third read of SHADOW had me noticing the words and symbols more than the plot, but by the time I got to CLAW I was back in plot mode. Taking a long break has made me more sensitive to the beauty in Wolfe's choice of words again. What a great book.

a few things that stand out so far:

Green as symbol of the proper path for Severian.

"When I found light at last, it was the green road stretching from the shadow of the Piteous Gate." In the dream this comes after the image of the beheaded Morwenna, (so like Thecla) symbolic of the acts that he must perform, that of killing that which he loves. (echos back in The Feast of St. Katherine, and forward in the Flooding of Urth) He is now a torturer, and as perverse as it is, he is on the green road towards the future he would choose.

Soon he meets the Green Man, who, while it was clear to me that he was an example of the future Ushas (or later) developments that Sev helped realize, I didn't see how ???I guess the term would be 'Truly Christian' he was. Step away from the sci-fi pond scum explanation, and swap God for Sun: " and by its intervention have at last made our peace in humankind's long struggle with the sun" There is a reconciliation with God implied here.

Then we here the Green Man's lament: "And to think I hoped in you. What a poor creature I am. I thought I had resigned myself to dying here among a people who are no more than walking dust; but at the tiniest gleam, all my resignation fell from me. I am a true man, friend. You are not,..."

I lack the terms, but I've heard this notion in Esoteric Christianity & Gurdjieff (& elsewhere) that we are not fully realized until we have unity within, until we are truly like Christ, and that only someone who has attained that is truly Christian, or as in Gurdjieff's system, a true Man, in the strict sense, and only then has the promised immortality. Here the Green man is telling us that his future is enlightened. They live without murder and have been reconciled. And note that Severian is "the tiniest gleam" that gave him hope. "gleam"

The Green Man goes on to say: "Perhaps you are right, and for us a new sun has come, and

because it has come we have forgotten it. If I am ever able to return to my own time, I will tell them there of you." They have forgotten "IT" that the New Sun came, and now that he has met Severian, he will remind them of "You"(Severian) not "IT", the New Sun. He knows that Severian is the New Sun! This pronoun shift is subtle but clearly implies that they are the same thing, as we learn later.

Then, when Severian chooses to help him, by giving him the half of his whetstone that will free him, he notes a change in the Green Man's disposition, "Then I saw the knowledge growing in him, so that he seemed to unfold in his great joy, as though he were already basking in the brighter light of his own day." The Green Man sees that Severian will indeed live up to his hope, and not just be 'walking dust'.

Great stuff.

another bit that stood out this time:

chap I, contemplating the Past, & how Vodalus threw away the effectual weapon of the ancient high civilization he wants to restore: "Vodalus, who wished as I did to summon it again, yet remained a creature of the present. That we are capable only of being what we are remains our unforgivable sin."

Here is one of those clues for us, implying a difference unseen by the narrator (or just feigned) that Severian is different from Vodalus, in that he isn't just a creature from the present, and at by fulfilling his future destiny he does summon. the Conciliator from the past. As well as summoning Apu Punchau.

Also note how CLAW is book-ended by pulling bald men out of stone dwellings; Barnoch and Apu Punchau. ?

okay, I was worried this would happen. I started reading the book yesterday and already I've spent a half hour writing at this forum and have a flood of illustration ideas at a time when I'm way to busy for any of this stuff.

Grief Gravy!!

~Son of Witz