

Hello, I'm a Newb

The Urth list — 9 messages, 8 voices, 30 Jun 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5643>

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Nicholas Jost — 30 Jun 2010, 21:28

Since Gene Wolfe was mentioned in an article appearing in First Things recently and was recommended through a friend I decided to pick up some of his books. I read "An Evil Guest" first, and once I realized I had missed pretty much the whole book, I picked up the New Sun series (including the fifth book) and promised I would pay more attention. I have read some of the archive and the notes on the Gene Wolfe Wiki (which I think is maintained by one of you folks?).

I am now going to add my entirely wild musings to the mix.

- 1.) Is Severian Albion? He becomes the "Storm God" in the end and the servitors of Albion also "serve" him especially when he is saved.
- 2.) Is he the same Storm God as is in an "Evil Guest"? If they both exist on the same timeline then "An Evil Guest" would be well within the period in which the new sun is in transit (I'm assuming Apu is pre-colonial South American).
- 3.) Has anyone else had difficulty explaining the plot to his aged grandmother and consciously skipped over the Dorcas character?
- 4.) Is Severian a proto(/post)-Christian (not -like) figure in a Mormon universe? That is it seems to have an endless hierarchy of gods. The concept of an "uncreate" blows this theory but the robots seem to have an endless hierarchy topped (roughly) by a race. Am I missing something?

Nicholas Jost

James Wynn — 30 Jun 2010, 21:55 · in reply to Nicholas Jost

- 1.) Is Severian Albion? He becomes the "Storm God" in the end and the servitors of Albion also "serve" him especially when he is saved.

Are you referring to William Blake's mythology?

- 2.) Is he the same Storm God as is in an "Evil Guest"? If they both exist on the same timeline then "An Evil Guest" would be well within the period in which the new sun is in transit (I'm assuming Apu is pre-colonial South American).

I don't think so. I don't think Severian and Cassie are in the same literary universe. The Storm God is described as an ancient alien who has been on Earth since before the evolution of mankind. He seems to be a sort of Cthulhu squid god. See "The Tree is My Hat" for a story set on Cassie's island. See "Endangered Species" and "Starwater Strains" for stories set in Severian's universe. Also the Long/Short Sun series.

- 3.) Has anyone else had difficulty explaining the plot to his aged grandmother and consciously skipped over the Dorcas character?

You were able to explained the plot to someone?

4.) Is Severian a proto(/post)-Christian (not -like) figure in a Mormon universe? That is it seems to have an endless hierarchy of gods. The concept of an "uncreate" blows this theory but the robots seem to have an endless hierarchy topped (roughly) by a race. Am I missing something?

I suggest you review the threads from a couple weeks ago on this. There's not much of a consensus on this. But _I_ ascribe the generations of gods to the Sun Cycle universe being a Christian Gnostic one with it's layer upon layer of generational aeons.

u+16b9

Jane Delawney — 30 Jun 2010, 22:01 · in reply to Nicholas Jost

First of all please forgive if I seem to change the message header for no reason; I already mentioned somewhere on list that my ISP's mail server simply /will not/ (no matter how I fiddle with the settings) return my list mails to me unless I start a new thread. This is very annoying, obviously! Please Nicholas take this as a direct response to your post of 22:28 tonight.

On 30/06/10 22:28, Nicholas Jost wrote:

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It's stated somewhere I think in the 5th book (can't be more specific right now, don't have the time frankly) that what is done on Urth at Severian's time (whether that is during his apprenticeship, wanderings, Autarchy, return out of time as the Conciliator, or indeed as the Sleeper Awakened upon Ushas) may 'echo' somehow back down the ages. Also, the deeds of those around him may do much the same thing.

In this context we find Urth/Ushas echoes/prefigurings (from the Hierodules' point of view, their time-sense runs backward vs. ours) of such popular and legendary myth-tropes as Dracula, Frankenstein (kind of backwards here, with the 'Monster' ie Baldanders as the master), Robin Hood (Vodulus is a somewhat perverted version of the 'good bandit'), Storm-gods (Severian seems to be in the role of Thor and similar deities, as well as that of Jesus on the Sea of Galilee, when he quietens the storm on Gyoll - though the idea that this storm is based within his out of control anger is more Thor-like than Christ-like by a very long way ... and possibly even more Marvel-Thor than Norse-Deity-Thor, for that matter), Sun-gods (Apu-Punchau is a name for the Inca solar deity Inti) and Fish-gods such as Oannes (or even Jesus again, though I do realise that the 'fish' thing has more to do with early Christian need for concealment (the ICHTHOS glyph) than with any real connection with the man Jesus.

3.) Has anyone else had difficulty explaining the plot to his aged grandmother and consciously skipped over the Dorcas character?

Duh. No actually :) Why did you need to explain the plot to your Grannie?

4.) Is Severian a proto(/post)-Christian (not -like) figure in a Mormon universe? That is it seems to have an endless hierarchy of gods. The concept

of an "uncreate" blows this theory but the robots seem to have an endless hierarchy topped (roughly) by a race. Am I missing something?

That's 'increate'. And as for Mormons, you tell us? I doubt there are many Mormon experts on this list.

cheers

JD

Nicholas Jost

David Duffy — 30 Jun 2010, 23:29 · in reply to Nicholas Jost

On Wed, 30 Jun 2010, Nicholas Jost wrote:

Welcome, Nicholas!

Since Gene Wolfe was mentioned in an article appearing in First Things recently and was recommended through a friend I decided to pick up some of his books. I read "An Evil Guest" first, and once I realized I had missed pretty much the whole book,

Perhaps not the best place to start ;)

I picked up the New Sun series (including the fifth book) and promised I would pay more attention. I have read some of the archive and the notes on the Gene Wolfe Wiki (which I think is maintained by one of you folks?).

Yes.

I am now going to add my entirely wild musings to the mix.

1.) Is Severian Albion? He becomes the "Storm God" in the end and the servitors of Albion also "serve" him especially when he is saved.

2.) Is he the same Storm God as is in an "Evil Guest"? If they both exist on the same timeline then "An Evil Guest" would be well within the period in which the new sun is in transit (I'm assuming Apu is pre-colonial South American).

Almost certainly not. Either it is well in our future, or in a different (cycle of the) universe. Severian muses that racial type (and I guess culture) is strongly determined by climate/geography, so that his future South America has ended up with similar cultures. Plus the conceit that he has translated future cultures into modern day equivalents: someone recently commented on the frisson encountered realising Frodo is actually Froda, similar to realizing what destriers look like, or what "petrol" is in Press's Soldiers of Paradise.

3.) Has anyone else had difficulty explaining the plot to his aged grandmother and consciously skipped over the Dorcas character?

It hasn't come up ;) but the aged grandmother might quite like the idea.

4.) Is Severian a proto(/post)-Christian (not -like) figure in a Mormon universe? That is it seems to have an endless hierarchy of gods. The concept of an "uncreate" blows this theory but the robots seem to have an endless hierarchy topped (roughly) by a race. Am I missing something?

The fact that the setting is bang-gnab cyclical universes, so any type of christian model has to handle multiple incarnations etc. That in early Western thought, and in SF, there is plenty of room in the great chain for higher beings than humankind. The Increate may be outside all these, like Stapledon, but Wolfe implies he may be poking around. In Stapledon's setup, there is evolution from universe to universe, so one could postulate less optimal Christs in earlier iterations. After saying that, Wolfe has explicitly said that Severian is -like.

This kind of stuff has been hashed over endlessly on this list and in a couple of books. Wolfe is deliberately ambiguous - not to mention that _UotNS_ may represent an (some say unhappy) evolution of ideas. The Long Sun books are (more) Gnostic at a miniature scale, which may be a case of _as above, so below_. But the Short Sun books are ...revisionist.

Basically, it comes down to whether you think BotNS has a happy ending or not. You might reread _the Cock, the Angel and the Eagle_. That is, the Hieros are doing as best as they can.

Cheers, David.

| David Duffy (MBBS PhD) , - _\|
| email: davidD at qimr.edu.au ph: INT+61+7+3362-0217 fax: -0101 / *
| Epidemiology Unit, Queensland Institute of Medical Research _,- _/
| 300 Herston Rd, Brisbane, Queensland 4029, Australia GPG 4D0B994A v

Jerry Friedman — 01 Jul 2010, 03:54 · in reply to Nicholas Jost

From: Nicholas Jost <nickjost at yahoo.com>
3.) Has anyone else had difficulty explaining the plot to his aged grandmother and consciously skipped over the Dorcas character?

Not me, but thanks for the smile.

Jerry Friedman

Josh Caswell — 01 Jul 2010, 18:06 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

James Wynn

3.) Has anyone else had difficulty explaining the plot to his aged grandmother and consciously skipped over the Dorcas character?

You were able to explained the plot to someone?

Hahaha, my feelings exactly. I recently tried to explain the plot to one of my best friends and success was marginal at best. Before that I attempted an explanation to my father..... (can't put enough dots here). I eventually conceded defeat and settled for "it's just an interesting book."

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 01 Jul 2010, 18:11 · in reply to Josh Caswell

Good heavens, explaining the plot isn't _that_ difficult.

"A young man is exiled from the Torturer's Guild for the crime of mercy. He meets many interesting people, has a variety of adventures, and ultimately becomes the ruler of his nation." The rest is details.

On Thu, Jul 1, 2010 at 11:06 AM, Josh Caswell <jandcaswell at gmail.com> wrote:
James Wynn

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Josh Caswell — 01 Jul 2010, 18:27 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

I'll grant you that much of it, but I was trying to give a feel for the nuances and fell into a downward spiral of complexities.

On Thu, Jul 1, 2010 at 2:11 PM, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
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Jeff Wilson — 02 Jul 2010, 01:16 · in reply to Nicholas Jost

Hey Nicholas! Welcome to the Monkey House.

On 6/30/2010 4:28 PM, Nicholas Jost wrote:

3.) Has anyone else had difficulty explaining the plot to his aged grandmother and consciously skipped over the Dorcas character?

My mother is also an aged grandmother, but she ended up explaining the plot of The Boy Who Hooked The Sun to me without knowing it, as part of her Hawaiian vacation slide show.

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The Mormon cosmology has some sophisticated nested structure, and there are indeed similar structures in the ascendancy of the Hieros and the supervision of the Urthly galaxies from the superior beings of Yesod, but the works maintain there's still one eternal Increate outside all of it. The exultant class **might** be a comment on the LDS' Exalted Man concept of an embodied God among many such, but it might equally likely be a coincidence.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
IEEE Student Chapter Blog at
< <http://ieeetamut.org> >