

some random thoughts: gematria, Forlesen, seal of Pas

The Urth list — 5 messages, 3 voices, 05 May 2014

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6543>

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Marc Aramini — 05 May 2014, 06:12

So ... I am trying to articulate my thoughts about Forlesen, a story where the theme is clear but the actual mechanism of Forlesen's life is a bit ... difficult. When Emmanuel Forlesen stops to pick up Abraham, Abraham says he is eldest of 13 children and his father's farm was taken to be used for a highway the very day he inherited it. Well, that's fine ... but that particular number and his name (just one child greater than the tribes of Israel and Jacob's children) and the speckled lights in the clouds put me in mind to some degree of Jacob's ladder. (those names are a little too religious to ignore anyway)

Anyway, Borski's idea that everything is a computer simulation and that the no yes no yes yes no yes yes is binary at the end hasn't quite convinced me, though I will confront it. It got me thinking of number cognates and how Wolfe uses them. In *Slaves of Silver*, the flashing colors through the tv set spell out HELP.

We have long puzzled over the strange numbers that sat on the Seal of Pas that probably mean very little in Long Sun, but while I was researching Jacob's ladder there was some almost Kabbalistic talk of how Sinai and the word for ladder have the same numerical value in the Jewish practice of gematria - that words or phrases of the same number value have some relationship to each other. Interestingly, there's actually a chart that assigns letters to numbers.

However, I have no patience for that kind of cryptic system. I just thought it was interesting that conceivably there is an existing religious number-letter cipher system that someone so inclined could use. I don't think that would be very fair at all, but the distinctly Jewish names and Emmanuel (God is with us) picking up destitute Abraham who lost his farm the day his father died to make a highway really does evoke some Jewish salvation ideas. Forlesen needs a bit more thinking - I don't want to declare that it simply is, Gregor Samsa turned beetle style. I think cause and effect are almost always discernible in Wolfe that prevents him from ever actually becoming an absurdist.

Gerry Quinn — 05 May 2014, 14:58 · in reply to Marc Aramini

From: Marc Aramini

[Forlesen]

Anyway, Borski's idea that everything is a computer simulation and that the no yes no yes yes no yes yes is binary at the end hasn't quite convinced me, though I will confront it.

That's an interesting idea, but I'm still inclined to think of Forlesen as metaphor for an ordinary working life (and a cynical take on middle management) rather than true SF.

- Gerry Quinn

Marc Aramini — 05 May 2014, 15:19 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Yeah it is definitely that kind of metaphor, but there are still things like the breakfast and coffee tasting like oil, the twelve types of dead, the shifting pillars, the difference between reflections and mirrors and other perceptions, the cop with his blood and urine catheter connections to his car that hint that maybe it is more than just an indeterminate dream fantasy metaphor with no scientific or "logical" explanation. The problem is figuring what oily coffee implies heh heh.

On Monday, May 5, 2014, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 05 May 2014, 20:46 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Oily coffee implies beans that are overroasted and brewed strong.

On Mon, May 5, 2014 at 8:19 AM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at gmail.com> wrote:

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Marc Aramini — 06 May 2014, 00:42 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Not the only oily thing though - oil spots under his car, etc. "He tasted the egg. It was good but slightly oily, as though a drop of motor oil had found its way into the grease in which she had fried it." Lots of oil everywhere.

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