

Tartaros's Blindness

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 21 Feb 2001

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Robert Borski — 21 Feb 2001, 22:21

El cucaracha having written:

<Tartaros is not only blind, was not only born blind, but is utterly and incurably and inalterably blind; even when riding/in possession of Auk, he cannot see through Auk's eyes but must ask Auk to describe things.>

Pardon my naiveté here--I am an end user, not a code jockey--but aren't the gods of Mainframe, unless they're riding someone or something--computer programs? And if the sibling "programs" of Tartaros--i.e., Scylla, Molpe, Sphingx, etc.--can process visual information, then it should be no great matter to splice the appropriate compiler sequences into Tartaros. That it hasn't ever been done before seems strictly a dictate of Pas's--perhaps reflecting his own bias against a defective son. As Scylla at one time puts it, "Daddy had this thing about a male heir." Certainly an impaired child--especially a first-born son--may have been disappointing to Typhon, perhaps even reflecting on his own notions of virility. But look at who it is that sides with father Pas when the revolt takes place in Mainframe: Tartaros--"the only unwilling god," as he puts it--and what better reward for the son who had every reason to be bitter, but remained true, than restoring his sight?

That Tartaros was born blind, and remained so for the entire first voyage of the Whorl and then some seems incontrovertible; that he must die the same way, given the super technology of Wolfe's Short Sun milieu, seems more than a little suspect.

Robert Borski

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

David DiGiacomo — 21 Feb 2001, 21:47 · follows Robert Borski

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Typhon's technology is extremely limited, and fallible.

The gods are not AIs, they are simulations of scanned humans. There is no suggestion that they can be reprogrammed. You will notice that Pas was not able to remove Piaton's virtual head or to correct the various character flaws of his children.

Finally, Wolfe presents Tartaros's blindness as an axiom, not a theory.

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