

Twin planets

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 09 Apr 2001

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Nicholas Gevers — 09 Apr 2001, 09:51

Daniel, thanks for your remarks--in a nutshell, yes, the Robinson books are eminently worth reading, the Dante parallels could do with a lot of expansion (how about it?), and the intertextuality with Le Guin's THE DISPOSSESSED is compelling. A thought there: in a Le Guin/Wolfe mapping, Anarres (attempt at utopia)=Blue, and Urras (dystopia)=both Urth (old, over-exploited, hopeless) and Green (like capitalist A-Io in THE DISPOSSESSED, only a Darwinist Hell in place of a Social Darwinist one.)

--Hurriedly, Nick Gevers.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 09 Apr 2001, 10:08 · follows Nicholas Gevers

Daniel,

Grumble: It's "Dan'l," with no "ie". Or "Blattid," or "Roach" if y'all prefer.

the Dante parallels could do with a lot of expansion (how about it?),

When I'm done reading Dante -- I only noticed because I happened to decide to read the Commedia recently.

and the intertextuality with Le Guin's THE DISPOSSESSED is compelling. A thought there: in a Le Guin/Wolfe mapping, Anarres (attempt at utopia)=Blue, and Urras (dystopia)=both Urth (old, over-exploited, hopeless) and Green (like capitalist A-Io in THE DISPOSSESSED, only a Darwinist Hell in place of a Social Darwinist one.)

H'mmm. I think this underestimates the "ambiguous" of Le Guin's subtitle: THE DISPOSSESSED is about two worlds each of which _claims_ to be "utopian" vis-a-vis the other, but neither quite manages to be a utopia. I think the key to understanding THE DISPOSSESSED is an idea expressed (of all places) in THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN v.1 -- the passage of the lake of the dead in Hildegrin's boat, where Dorcas delivers herself of a little speech on how the good and the evil in the world remain in a kind of balance between internal and external.

Of course, Le Guin isn't a Catholic, but move the idea in to her belief-system and you have the key to THE DISPOSSESSED: each world _ought_ to be a Utopia, Urras because it has the resources, Anarres because it has the anarcho-Taoist philosophy: but neither quite makes it because it lacks what the other possesses. Each is dispossessed, each incomplete without the other.

Of course, any simple mapping to THE DISPOSSESSED is going to be radically flawed because

SHORT SUN contrasts four worlds, not two, and (counting roughly off the top of my head) at least ten systems of governance -- Viron's, New Viron's, Gaon's, Soldo's, Blanko's, the village on Green, the inhum city, Dorp, uh, the place at the end of the Whorl where Pig gets his eye, and the Commonwealth: all their governances are shown at least in miniature; all are offered to us in contrast with the others.

H'mmm.

Does someone have handy their copy of SHADOW? It would be interesting to look at SHORT SUN in comparison with the short treatise on governance Severian recites to the Malrubius-aquastor.

--Dan'l

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