

why the problem with astral travel?

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 18 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1366>

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maa32 — 18 Apr 2001, 08:53

I really don't see why some are so distraught over Wolfe's use of a really big Godling or astral travel. Severian's relationship with the new sun seems equally mysterious. How can a man freely travel back and forth in time just because he has some affinity with a star? without mechanical "SF" enhancement, how does Wolfe really explain Severian's connection? How about silk's auto-resurrection at the end of Calde of the Long Sun? I really don't think that access to the corridor of time is any different than travelling through space with a mental projection. The sorceror in Sword of the Lictor is clearly a psionist. Is his mental fortitude any different than magic or astral projection? Does a device or genetic alteration allow him to use his mental powers? I don't think so. According to A.D. + D., astral projection is a well established psionic ability, as is conjunction with another mind. The godlings might very well be mechanical. who cares?

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

William Ansley — 18 Apr 2001, 23:30 · follows maa32

At 8:53 AM -0700 4/18/01, maa32 wrote:

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I am one of those who complained about the "impossible" size of the godlings as not being "science fictional." You know what? You are right. This was a silly objection on my part, considering all of the stuff I have swallowed without complaint in other so-called SF. (Time travel, FTL drives and "Psi powers" are just the beginning.)

This however doesn't mean that I don't still object to the godlings' size or the astral projection. Neither of these things added anything essential to the story as far as I was concerned and both created confusion and loose ends (the godlings a little and astral projection a lot).

Now, I can only assume that both of these parts of the story are essential, since Wolfe wrote it and he is very careful about such things, and I am just missing the point. But I am not at all sure I am willing to give this series years as some have recommended. I wouldn't have given TBotNS or Peace years of rereading if there wasn't some aspect of these books I enjoyed from the start.

I am hard pressed to find this aspect in TBotSS.

I am becoming convinced that my problem with TBotSS is that it is Wolfe's most explicitly religious (long) work and I am an areligious person. If this is so, I don't think I am ever going to care for it more than I do now.

William Ansley

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Michael Straight — 19 Apr 2001, 08:53 · follows William Ansley

On Wed, 18 Apr 2001, William Ansley wrote:

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I thought the main objection to the godlings is that in Act 1 (New Sun) the author goes into detail about why anything that big would have to live in the sea or collapse under its own weight and then in Act 3 he presents us with such a creature without giving us any hint of how it is possible, or even a sense that we're supposed to see this as a physics-defying miracle (and Typhon/Mainframe's wonders seem to be otherwise technological, unlike the "miraculous" wonders of Severian or Silkhorn's astral travel).

(Maybe our hint is in Act 2 at the talus construction plant, but then what do you do with the obvious hints that organic Pig (he eats, his eyes are flesh) is a godling?)

-Rostrum

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