

Book of Silk, Book of Gold

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 08 Apr 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/170>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Charles Dye — 08 Apr 1997, 10:23

Marching orders from mantis, m.driussi at genie.com :

[snip] (Long ago someone around here whose name I should remember was saying that the Writings smacked of Marcus Aurelius. Time has come to follow up on that . . . <reaching back into auxiliary brain> . . . so how 'bout it, Charles Dye? Could you give us some links between the Writings and the Meditations?)

Mr. Wolfe has inserted several references to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and his "Meditations" into the Long Sun books. Here is a short list; there are probably others I haven't dug up yet. My Marcus passages are from a translation by George Long (coincidence, of course.)

In his exorcism in chapter 11 of "Nightside," Silk begins to read a passage from the second book of the "Meditations":

The soul of man does violence to itself, first of all when it becomes an abscess and, as it were, a tumour on the universe, so far as it can. For to be vexed at anything which happens is a separation of ourselves from nature, in some part of which the natures of all other things are contained. In the next place, the soul does violence to itself when it turns away from any man, or even moves towards him with the intention of injuring, such as are the souls of those who are angry. In the third place, the soul does violence to itself when it is overpowered by pleasure or by pain. Fourthly, when it plays a part, and does or says anything insincerely and untruly. Fifthly, when it allows any act of its own and any movement to be without an aim, and does anything thoughtlessly and without considering what it is, it being right that even the smallest things be done with reference to an end; and the end of rational animals is to follow the reason and the law of the most ancient city and polity.

In chapter 1 of "Lake," Horn mimics Silk quoting the fifth book of the "Meditations":

Live with the gods. And he does live with the gods who constantly shows to them that his own soul is satisfied with that which is assigned to him, and that it does all that the daemon wishes, which Zeus hath given to every man for his guardian and guide, a portion of himself. And this is every man's understanding and reason.

(Horn's final sentence, as Silk awakens, has an oddly Ascian flavor)

In chapter 3 of "Lake" Silk recites to Maytera Marble a sentence from the seventh book of "Meditations":

Nature which governs the whole will soon change all things which thou seest, and out of their substance will make other things, and again other things from the substance of them, in order that the world may be ever new.

Chapter 2 of "Calde" has Maytera Mint presiding at Madera Rose's funeral sacrifice. Her text comes from the second "Meditations":

Whatever this is that I am, it is a little flesh and breath, and the ruling part. Throw away thy books; no longer distract thyself: it is not allowed; but as if thou wast now dying, despise the flesh, it is blood and bones and a network, a contexture of nerves, veins and arteries. See the breath also, what kind of a thing it is; air, and not always the same, but every moment send out and again sucked in. The third part then is the ruling part: consider thus: Thou art an old man; no longer let this be a slave, no longer be pulled by the strings like a puppet to unsocial movements, no longer be either dissatisfied with thy present lot, or shrink from the future.

Other possible links to the Golden Marcus include Silk's golden hair; the "Aureate Path" (the Long Sun, viewed metaphorically as the road of the dead); the golden circuitry of the cards used as money. Cards appear to be rectangles of roughly golden ratio, which might or might not be coincidental.

The Silk-as-Marcus link contrasts neatly with the Severian-as-Claudius link. Marcus Aurelius Antoninus really was the enlightened (ahem) ruler that Tiberius Claudius only became in Robert Graves's fiction. Claudius, Marcus Aurelius ... can we expect a Constantine analog in Mr. Wolfe's next series?

raster at highfiber.com