

Auguries; Gods; Connections; Mint

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 May 1997

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David_Lebling — 11 May 1997, 11:47

Joel (et al.),

Auguries:

Do we ever witness an augury (not just a sacrifice) conducted by anyone other than Silk? His predictions are both accurate and "obvious" (in that they can easily be explained as coming from his own foreshadowings of the future, or from hints emplanted during his enlightenment). (In my euhemeristic mode).

I doubt that Pas and family are real gods in the sense that Wolfe grants godhood to the (e.g.) Greek pantheon. It is, however, amusing to speculate that when Pike refers to devils entering the whorl, he could well be referring to demons (in the Catholic sense) occupying the virtual consciousnesses of the gods of the whorl. I don't actually buy this one, because it seems clear to me that some of the gods are good (Kypris seems to be, or have become so; Pas may be on the way, and Tartaros as well). I suppose even a demon might be redeemed in the end, though (see Blish's "Black Easter" and "The Day After Judgement" for a view on this).

Connections:

As for why the two series are connected, the easy answer is that it's Wolfe having fun as he is wont to do. It does cause timeline problems, an issue I've also raised (though these problems first surface in The Urth of the New Sun, and only get a little worse in Long Sun).

The harder answer is that both series are at some level about aspects of religion, and "enlightenment" in particular. New Sun is about someone raised in bad circumstances coming to understand God and lead a Christian or even Christ-like life. (There's far more to be said about it than that, of course; is Severian Christian or even moral in his actions, for example?) Long Sun is, as Wolfe has said, about idolatry (on several levels: to pursue just one example, the Ayuntiamiento's pursuit of eternal life is a form of idolatry). Silk comes to reject his idolatrous religion after an encounter with God, literally saving the world/whorl in the process.

Although other Wolfe books are religious in theme, I think what he's doing in these two series is working out different ways in which people come to God. I expect the Short Sun series will do the same.

This is hardly to say that that's all they're about. After all, Moby Dick is about God, too, but that's only a part of its subject matter. Wolfe has mentioned some of the other things New Sun is about (the "stay-at-home" future, genetic tinkering as better than mechanical technology to produce "tools", and so on). We've come up with other things Long Sun is about, such as "Mind" and "identity."

Mint:

Another question about Mint: Why did she want to die when the Grain Exchange collapsed? We even get Remora's interpretation of her dream about this event, and I'm still as puzzled about it as about Silk's "isn't it obvious?" re his suicidal impulses on the dirigible. When Wolfe or a Wolfean character says "obvious," I get scared, 'cause it usually isn't!

-vizcacha

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