

Thinking about Questions

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 14 May 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/286>

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Joel Priddy — 14 May 1997, 15:51

Geez, an opportunity to get answers from the horses mouth... (or rather, the wolf's mouth, which is a more satisfying image) Am I up to the task? Should I ask a question at all? It feels like looking in the back of the book for the answer key... Who am I kidding, of course I'll ask a question!

I'm split between the two concerns I've already posted to this list: one is on the origin of the world (just when in Typhon's reign did he send off the Whorl? Specifically, had he been grafted onto Piaton yet, or did the idea for grafting himself onto Piaton come after creating the image of Pas?), and one is on the nature of the Whorl as it exists now (what's the source of information for the divination's from augury?)

To expand a bit on these two questions: (1) When did Typhon get the head graft? It seems to be a pretty recent development when Severian returns from Yesod, but Urth technology is already in decline (one doesn't see many fliers anymore, and the villagers don't recognize the boat Severian disembarks from) and the culture doesn't seem anything like what would appear to have been the parent culture for the Whorl. Three possibilities would appear to be: (a) The second head of Pas is Piaton, meaning the Whorl was at least programmed, if not actually setting sail when Severian met the still-living Typhon, (b) Pas is an image designed by Typhon in his younger days to be mythic and imposing which later inspired a perhaps now-doddering Typhon to recreate it in actuality. This puts the Whorl's launch within Typhon's natural lifespan, a matter of decades previous to Severian's visit, or (c) poor Piaton is the latest in a series of mount/bodies for Typhon, meaning that the Whorl could have been launched full centuries earlier.

(2) What is the source of information for the auguries? The options that my soft little brain can come up with for the source of Silk's very accurate divination are: chance (lucky guess); divine (the Outsider); mechanical (Mainframe); mystical (the gods); or psychic (Silk himself). I don't think it's a lucky guess (because this is a Wolfe book, after all), and I don't think it's from the Outsider (because it seems like more direct interaction than we'd expect from the Outsider). I don't think it's from Mainframe, because if Mainframe had such a subtle form of mind control, I think most of the story's more dramatic events wouldn't have needed to occur. I don't want to believe that it's the gods as real supernatural gods, as I've stated before. And if Silk is a psychic precog... well, it seems like an awful lot of power to explain away one little event. So what does that leave me with?

If anyone has any thoughts or input on these questions, please let me know. I'd hate to waste an chance to ask Wolfe a question that's common knowledge, or flawed in some way that's obvious to an outside observer.

JOEL

(gizzard or cyphlothorax... I'm as indecisive on names as I am on questions)