

First Post-Many Thoughts

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 05 Jun 1997

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Michael Straight — 05 Jun 1997, 16:55

I've known about this mailing list for months, but waited until I finally got my hands on Exodus re-read the first three, and finished the fourth before I took a look at the archives. I thoroughly enjoyed the Long Sun "quartet," and now that I've read through the archives, I'm deeply grateful for many of your insights which have helped me appreciate this series even more. Since my first choice for a Whorl-name, "Thorax" has already been bandied about, I think I'll let y'all call me "Rostrum."

Having read through the earlier discussions, I'd like to comment on a few points that haven't been discussed.

1) I really like the idea of the Whorl having been in the Blue/Green system for years as it explains several things including Q's presence, the revolt of Pas's family, and the ship failing, but I think there's some counter-evidence.

When Silk sees the outside of the Whorl for the first time in Lake, he sees a flash of light and then the Whorl is shaken as if by the Outsider's hand. It seemed clear to me that the ship's engines were firing and it was accelerating/decelerating. The implication seemed to be that the ship had at that moment started to arrive at its destination. If it had been in a (presumably) stable orbit of the Blue/Green system for years, why would the engines be firing?

2) When Kypris offers Silk the chance to "be Pas" what exactly is she really offering? My first thought in the scene where Silk's face becomes one of the heads of Pas was, "Which head? The Typhon (controlling) head or the other (servant) head?" Wouldn't Typhon "riding" Silk be a very similar sort of thing to the way he "rode" the slave whose body his head was attached to? Have Tartaros & Kypris assembled the "functional" parts of Pas and now need a personality (Silk) to "control" the Pas program, or is it the other way around?

As others have pointed out, it seems likely that Silk is the body Pas was intended to possess/ride when it came time for the Cargo to disembark and colonize. Is Kypris proposing an ironic reversal of things? Did it happen? Is Silk's personality controlling the Pas program now? Or is Kypris really on Typhon's side and is she proposing a way of using Silk to restore Typhon?

3) There are at least two sets of scenes that I can't think of a path for Horn to know about them. First are the scenes where Musk trains the hawk and prepares the kite. Second is the one where Q turns into a winged serpent. Does Lemur ever reveal to Silk how they brought down the flier? If so, the Musk scenes could be fictional reconstructions. Likewise, Q's thoughts could be fictions Horn extrapolates from subsequent knowledge of the inhumani. Are those satisfying explanations? Any other scenes that seem like they must be fictional?

4) Re: the death of the bird named Hierax - I got the impression that Mucor had possessed it and caused it to fall in order to save Silk. Anyone else agree?

5) Re: the shape of Silk's voided cross - Everyone seems to assume that it's made up of capital gammas whereas I'd been thinking of the looping lower-case gammas.

6) Re: the mechanism of sacrifice - Since all sacrifices are done in front of a Sacred Window, perhaps there's simply a low-level program (like a monitor) that watches for sacrifices and passes the data along to the appropriate god. Since the digitized personalities seem to have some limits on their attention spans, they may have set up some kind of instructions like "when I'm doing a, don't interrupt me unless x number of babies get sacrificed, when I'm doing b, don't interrupt me unless y number of babies get sacrificed, unless it's Silk, in which case interrupt me no matter what."

7) Re: the mechanism of augury - What does the augur do immediately before a sacrifice? He *looks at the Window* and begs for a theophany. Perhaps Mainframe gives augurs subliminal messages. Or perhaps sacrifices are normally no more accurate than horoscopes, but at the sacrifice at Orpine's funeral, Kypris gave Silk a subliminal message before her theophany. (Why?)

8) vizcacha wrote in what seems to be a majority opinion:

Wolfe in the person of Horn chides us for thinking a partial possession by Kypris could turn Mint into a great general.

I got the exact opposite impression from this passage. My take was that, just as Silk often misinterprets things, Horn is doing the same. I think Wolfe is chiding the misconception, articulated by Horn, that Love is a warm, fuzzy, syrupy thing when, in fact, true Love, as exemplified by the Outsider (whom Silk says Kypris will become more like, the more she becomes like Love), is a powerful, forceful, even fearsome thing.

Also, it seems that, in general, possession by any god gives the possessee amazing skills - look at what Kypris+Chenille can do with a knife.

Speaking of vizcacha, I can't tell you how cool I think it is to see Dave Lebling on this list. I'm a major Infocom fan and highly recommend their games - even after 10-15 years, they're still some of the best computer adventure games available (and you can get almost all of them on a CD from Activision for about \$20). I haven't played Starcross yet, but it's definitely on my list of games I want to spend some time with. I loved Spellbreaker, Dave! I've always thought Gene Wolfe, with his incredible gifts of subtlety would be a great interactive-fiction writer.

Well, I've got more thoughts, but that's way too many for one post already.

-Rostrum