

Silk's Religion

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 10 Jun 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/337>

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Michael Straight — 10 Jun 1997, 09:51

I think one of the most well-done parts of this series is the way it is able to portray Silk's religious experiences and faith in the Outsider in a way that is compelling, but without the author definitively authenticating them. At the very beginning, when Silk was enlightened, I thought, "This is interesting, Wolfe seems to be telling the reader that God really exists in this universe." And then when Crane made his casual statement about brain seizures, it hit me like a ton of bricks. And the whole thing is further complicated by the revelation that the book is not by an omniscient third person but by Horn, who might very likely tend toward hagiography.

The only chink in the ambiguity is that Silk knew the Whorl was surrounded by stars long before he saw them. Is there an explanation for this other than that the Outsider's enlightenment was real? The best I can think of is that, as an engineered embryo, Silk might have some latent Mucor-like psi-powers that enabled him to see people all over the Whorl and pick up knowledge about the Whorl. Or maybe Typhon planted some kind of "time-bomb" in his brain that when it went off would reveal to him the nature of the Whorl so that he could lead the Exodus.

Was Silk really the devout, humble man Horn portrays him as? Not only do we have cause to doubt the Outsider's existence, but we don't really know how much of Silk's good qualities were given to him by Horn.

One of my favorite parts of the series were the long prayers Silk prays, first to several of the gods, and then to the Outsider. The prayers to Molpe and Tartaros and Hierax were very affecting in their echoes of the Psalms (will I die and never serve you again?), in their humility, and strict self-examination.

But then the contrast between these prayers and the prayer offered to the Outsider is even more beautiful. In the first case, he promises to sacrifice animals if the gods will spare his life. In the second, he offers his own life if the Outsider will forgive Silk's enemies (making Silk quite the Christ figure).

But how likely is it that Silk recounted his prayers to Horn? Aren't these more likely prayers Horn wrote to put in his mouth? Only Wolfe could make me sad that parts of a work of fiction might be fictional!

-Rostrum

Michael Richman — 14 Jun 1997, 02:17 · follows Michael Straight

At 09:51 AM 6/10/97 -0400, you wrote:

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God really exists in this universe." And then when Crane made his casual statement about brain seizures, it hit me like a ton of bricks.

Wolfe seems to have it in for doctors. In *Soldier of the Mist* [page 213], Kichesippos, a doctor owned by the regent of the Rope Makers, examines Latro:

[Kichesippos asks], "Were you wearing a helmet when your injury occurred?"

I told him I did not know.

"That's right, you forget. Is that your only symptom?"

"Yes," I told him.

Lo said, "Gods appear to him. Sometimes."

Kichesippos sighed. "Occasional hallucinations..."

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