

Patera Pike's Ghost

The Whorl list — 6 messages, 5 voices, 23 Jan 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/42>

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David_Lebling — 23 Jan 1997, 17:05

I'm puzzled over the appearance of Patera Pike's "ghost" in _Lake_.

Silk hears Pike walking about upstairs, hears his bed creak, and sees him in the bedroom. Then Pike disappears (dissolve into mist, actually) and immediately afterward Silk sees a smallish black shape which he thinks is Oreb fly out the window.

Oreb, who as we have previously observed sees better than anyone, denies being in the bedroom, and when Silk decides he probably jumped out the window (being unable to fly yet), he denies that too.

Oreb is pretty reliable, so I don't think he's lying. Silk has a known tendency to come up with an explanation for everything, and those explanations don't always turn out to be right.

Did Silk see an inhumu (probably Quetzal?). Are there any other cases of such _observed_ shapeshifting on the part of Quetzal (or anyone else, for that matter)? Recall that we haven't even met Quetzal, though we have seen Teasel attacked. Later in the story, Quetzal invariably disappears when everyone's back is turned.

This is the only incident I can think of in the books that doesn't have a rationalistic explanation, and it's also the only "supernatural" event that isn't immediately explained away by someone. Silk in fact seems to relish the weirdness, making a remark about the manteion being full of "gods and ghosts."

Any thoughts?

Dave Lebling
(david_lebling at avid.com)

ps: I hope everyone else is having as much fun with this list as I am!

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Doug Eigsti — 25 Jan 1997, 07:09 · follows David_Lebling

[Posted from Whorl, the mailing list for Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun]

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Any thoughts?

Dave Lebling
(david_lebling at avid.com)

David,

I would put Pike's haunting in the same category as the "asomatous travel" Mucor performs. On page 62 of LAKE Silk ruminates to Oreb on the supernatural. Here he groups the manifestations of "gods and ghosts" together, including Kypris, Pike and "all the rest". Strangely he rejects Mucor's cavortings as supernatural, preferring to classify them as being of the devil. So, to Silk, things supernatural would be pertaining to the gods. What "all the rest" encompasses he does not elaborate.

I would eliminate the appearances of the gods in Sacred windows and glasses. These are technological marvels, granted indistinguishable from magic, that have a "natural" explanation. Mucor, Pike, Quetzal and perhaps Silk's uncanny abilities would fall into the supernatural, in spite of the conclusions arrived at by Silk. Silk has a pawn's whorl-view, he is not privy to the machinations of the Marvelous Brass Chess Playing Automaton that inhabit mainframe.

How do you suppose Horn sees things? Is he intentionally misleading the reader by having Silk come to the wrong conclusions time and again?

=Doug Eigsti=
doug at nti.com

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Fernando Q. Gouvea — 25 Jan 1997, 09:38 · follows Doug Eigsti

**** On Thu, 23 Jan 97 17:05:52 -0500, David_Lebling at avid.com said:

DL> I'm puzzled over the appearance of Patera Pike's "ghost" in _Lake_.

DL> Did Silk see an inhumu (probably Quetzal?). Are there any other cases DL> of such

observed shapeshifting on the part of Quetzal (or anyone DL> else, for that matter)? Recall that we haven't even met Quetzal, DL> though we have seen Teasel attacked. Later in the story, Quetzal DL> invariably disappears when everyone's back is turned.

I think that's a very interesting possibility, one that hadn't occurred to me. It's true that the ghost incident is one of the more mysterious ones in the series. The thing that's missing to make this a plausible explanation, though, is a reason: why would Quetzal be doing that? Why create an appearance of Patera Pike?

In fact, the issue of Patera Pike's role in the story is itself an interesting one. He never appears, but he seems to be important in a number of levels (for example, it seems to have been his prayers that initiated the Outsider's action, or at least Silk thinks so).

Fernando

Fernando Q. Gouvea
Chair, Dept. of Math & CS Editor, MAA Online
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Dear Miss Manners:

My home economics teacher says that one must never place one's elbows on the table. However, I have read that one elbow, in between courses, is all right. Which is correct?

Gentle Reader:

For the purpose of answering examinations in your home economics class, your teacher is correct. Catching on to this principle of education may be of even greater importance to you now than learning correct current table manners, vital as Miss Manners believes that is.

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Jim Jordan — 25 Jan 1997, 10:42 · follows Fernando Q. Gouvea

[Posted from Whorl, the mailing list for Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun]

How do you suppose Horn sees things? Is he intentionally misleading the reader by having Silk come to the wrong conclusions time and again?

=Doug Eigsti=

I don't think so. The question has been raised whether Severian is a trustworthy narrator. If we cannot trust Severian, then the whole story falls apart, since there is no way to check on it. Thus, the story is Severian's story, period, warts and all. In conversation Wolfe rejected the notion that Severian is duplicitous.

Wolfe's game is to give you all the facts, so you can figure it out. If we cannot trust the narration, the game is no good. The suggestion of a duplicitous narrator destroys everything Wolfe is trying to do.

And I think the same applies here. If Horn is misleading us, there is really no way we can know it. But there really is no reason to think he is. We are to assume that Horn spend hours, perhaps days, talking with Silk, and that he is accurately reporting what Silk told him. Wolfe as a conservative Catholic assumes that Matthew and Mark are telling the truth about Jesus, and the reader of the Long Sun Quartet should assume Horn is telling the truth about Silk and the other characters.

The other way Horn knows stuff is by interviewing the people who made the exodus with him, who happen to be many people who chatted with Silk and could tell him a lot about Silk. It would be interesting to test this hypothesis by taking a list of the people with Horn, and then seeing how much of the Quartet could have been reported by those people. For instance, all the passages about Chenille and Auk are thereby accounted for.

JBJordan

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

CoxRathvon — 25 Jan 1997, 11:46 · follows Jim Jordan

I tend to agree with David Lebling that the vision of Pike, followed by an object flitting out the window (not Oreb, he wouldn't lie), is probably our dark friend the shape-shifting Quetzal. Silk's ruminations about gods, devils, and ghosts can't be taken too seriously here in the first book of the adventure, for Silk still has a lot to learn about the true nature of the Whorl.

I have another question about Quetzal which I'm still formulating and will post soon. It has to do with his presence at Silk's apparent death, when Silk's floater crashes into the pit and he is temporarily buried--and when, notably, Silk has a vision of his **four** parents (two biological, plus his adoptive mother, plus Calde Tussah). More on that soon.

--Henry Rathvon

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

Fernando Q. Gouvea — 25 Jan 1997, 12:08 · follows CoxRathvon

**** On Sat, 25 Jan 1997 10:42:09 -0600, Jim Jordan <jbjordan at gnt.net> said:

How do you suppose Horn sees things? Is he intentionally misleading the reader by having Silk come to the wrong conclusions time and again?

Jim> I don't think so. The question has been raised whether Severian is Jim> a trustworthy narrator. If we cannot trust Severian, then the whole Jim> story falls apart, since there is no way to check on it. Thus, the Jim> story is Severian's story, period, warts and all. In conversation Jim> Wolfe rejected the notion that Severian is duplicitous. Wolfe's game

Well, we need to be a little careful here. Severian certainly does report himself saying things to people that do not agree with what he has told us in his narrative. So he's unreliable at some point: either he hasn't told the truth in the past, or in the narrative. And certainly there are things in the narrative that he could have made explicit but which are only hinted at.

Jim> is to give you all the facts, so you can figure it out. If we cannot Jim> trust the narration, the game is no good. The suggestion of a Jim> duplicitous narrator destroys everything Wolfe is trying to do. And I Jim> think the same applies here. If Horn is misleading us, there is really Jim> no way we can know it. But there really is no reason to think he is.

I agree here that there is no hint that Horn is **intentionally** misleading us, though of course there's things in his "defence" that suggest that he may have missed something (e.g., his comments on Auk).

Jim> We are to assume that Horn spend hours, perhaps days, talking with Jim> Silk, and that he is accurately reporting what Silk told him. Wolfe as Jim> a conservative Catholic assumes that

Matthew and Mark are telling the Jim> truth about Jesus, and the reader of the Long Sun Quartet should Jim> assume Horn is telling the truth about Silk and the other characters.

Actually, the comparison with the gospels is interesting. Are we to think of this as analogous to, say, the gospel of Luke (which presents itself as based on investigation of the sources and eyewitnesses, and seems intended as largely objective, though of course there's some interpretation involved), or the gospel of John (which is written *long* after the fact, and clearly has a large layer of interpretation superimposed on the story)?

Fernando Q. Gouvea
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Science is facts; just as houses are made of stones, so is science made
of facts; but a pile of stones is not a house and a collection of facts
is not necessarily science.
-- Henri Poincaré

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