

An eye for an eye?

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 19 Oct 1999

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William H. Ansley — 19 Oct 1999, 00:49

Alex David Groce <Alex_Groce at gs246.sp.cs.cmu.edu> wrote:
Here we go:

Galatians 4:13-15:

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13 As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. 14 Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. 15 What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.

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Now, it seems likely that with the set-up of Maytera Marble's blindness and Horn's quest for her, and the fact that "Horn" in his new body is missing an eye, we will probably have an example of someone tearing out their eyes and giving them to someone else coming up in the future of SHORT SUN.

It seems like this is a reversal of the passage above, where 15 is what has given rise to the suggestion that Paul's illness was some kind of vision problem. Horn is the St. Paul figure here, and is probably going to give up his own eye for Marble's eye at some point. On the other hand, if it is Silk's body that Horn is in, perhaps this happened before Horn came to inhabit Silk's body, and so we have a literal case of the Paul figure taking on the sufferings of the Christ figure. And then there's the Odin conflation floating around all of this...

vizcacha brings up the Moses analogy also, which suggests that Silk himself may not ever set foot on Blue. Moses, of course, died before he reached the Promised Land, but came back later at the transfiguration in the Gospels. Is Horn the means by which Silk is setting foot on Blue only after death?

Alex,

At first I was very annoyed with you. I sat down at my computer all set to impress the heck out of the readers of this discussion group with the clever things I had figured out about Horn's and Marble's eyes and what should appear when I checked my email but your message on the very same subject.

("Why, oh, why," I berated myself, "did I waste all that time on leatherskin legs?")

But, after a moments thought, I am grateful. I never would have come up with that passage

from Galations, which adds a wonderful extra dimension to the eye swap meet, if that's what it was.

I think I know who Horn gave his eye to and I don't think he gave it up to get an eye for Marble. I think we are going to have two instances of people joyfully tearing out their eyes and giving them to someone else before _The Book of the Short Sun_ is over.

Horn gave his eye to Pig. And Marble's daughter gave up one of her eyes for her mother.

Because I could not leave Pig blind, these people were able to bring me here, and so ended any chance of success I may have had. [p. 308]

Who is Pig? I don't know. in "Proper Names in the Text" he is referred to as "a mercenary of the LONG SUN WHORL." Horn mentions him a few times, although I don't have time to look for any more page numbers now. He has to be someone Horn met on the _Whorl_ after he returned to it, unless Horn left an awful lot more out of _The Book of Silk_ than we think. He seems to have meant a great deal to Horn; I am pretty sure he says at some point that he loved Pig more than anyone other than Silk.

Olivine is "a young chem of VIRON," according to "Proper Names in the Text." I think she is also Marble's daughter or half-daughter(?). The eye Horn intends to give to Maytera Marble is hers. "I put Olivine's eye in the pocket." [p. 310]. Olivine is definitely Hammerstone's daughter.

(What I would not give for Hammerstone now. Olivine, lend us your father please.) [p. 290]

On page 84, Marble tells Horn that she and Hammerstone "had begun a daughter." She also says, "We never got far with her, and I don't suppose she'll ever be born unless my husband takes a new wife, poor little thing." This is why I said "half-daughter(?)" above. What do you call the relation between a chem and the mother that started building her if she was completed by her father and his new wife?

Of course, even if Olivine does give up one of her eyes freely to Horn for him to give to her mother, the fact that Horn gave up one of his eyes may have triggered the event, even if it wasn't, strictly speaking, a trade.

William Ansley

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.