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The Whorl list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 09 Apr 2000

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Kieran Mullen — 09 Apr 2000, 15:12

From whorl-errors at lists.best.com Sun Apr 9 13:19:29 CDT 2000

----- MESSAGE whorl.v010.n101.3 -----

From: "Timothy Reilly" <treilly at ozemail.com.au>

Subject: April Fool's Day posts

Fascinating idea to start TBLS in Vol 3. Maybe if I had I would've enjoyed it more. On the other hand maybe it's just hard for Australians to enjoy a series where a murderously malevolent goddess is named after a cute little marsupial like an echidna. (For those who don't know - or possess Lexicon Urthus - an echidna is similar to a big hedgehog, and even more harmless). It's as if the gods are named Pas, Scylla, Goofy, Tartarous...

Tim

No doubt half a hundred people will write to you that the definition of echidna:

echidna \E*chid"na\, n. [L., a viper, adder, Gr. ?.] 1. (Gr. Myth.) A monster, half maid and half serpent.

(Source: Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary)

Is probably the one you want. Unless of course Wolfe meant:

Echidna: Constraint logic programming embedded in an object-oriented language. The syntax is an extension of Edinburgh Prolog.

["Hierarchical Arc Consistency Applied to Numeric Processing in Constraint Logic Programming", G. Sidebottom et al, TR-91-06, CSS-IS, Simon Fraser U, and Comp Intell 8(4) (1992)].

since she **is** a computer construct... Nah... ;-).

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

Alice Turner — 09 Apr 2000, 21:11 · follows Kieran Mullen

Ratty remarked:

Adam asked:

.> Is there textual evidence from TBOTLS that Silk may be in a two-headed Pas body? (It's been a while since I reread it.)

Near the end of the last book Kypris appears in a Window and says seductively, "Silk, wouldn't you like to be like Pas? We'd be together then....They can scan you in at Mainframe. As I was scanned, Silk, with him. He held my hand....You'll go on with your life, Silk. Just as it is.

You'd be Pas too. And he would be you. Look."

And she shows him the image of a "bronze-limbed man with rippling muscles and two heads." One is Silk's.

But there isn't the least textual evidence that he took her up on it.

There's no evidence that he didn't either, of course, which is also most lupine. I suppose we'll eventually find out.

Given the "theology" of the narrative, which is never far from the surface, I've wondered about this. Silk's ascension to "heaven" (past the "border mountains," to quote an old hymn), following his death and resurrection and preceding his return in the final conflagration of (his part of) the Whorl, closely follows the New Testament narrative. In the cited passage, Wolfe at least alludes to Silk's ascension to "the right hand of the Father," with Kypris as a surrogate for the Holy Spirit.

Not so closely as all that. Twenty-two years, IIRC, intervene. We have to assume, from the logic of fiction, that Silk has been alive and active, either on the Whorl or on Green (or on Blue, possibly) during that entire time. My vote puts him on the Whorl.

The question raised in my mind is this: Is the Pas of the Whorl the "evil Typhon" of earth? Clearly he originated there, but he actually seems to be the "good god" of the Whorl. If this be the case, then for Silk to allow a transcript of himself to be entered into Mainframe would not be out of accord with his character. On the other hand, this might be something like "The Last Temptation of Silk," which he should reject. I've never sorted this question out. I suspect that time will tell, and we'll find out eventually.

I think we probably will find out. But, as I said earlier, I think Pas is mostly dead. Nor is there much evidence that he was good. Kypris liked him, but he was her ticket to the movies, wasn't he? None of the others seemed to like him, and I doubt that you and I would have, either.

"Bronze limbed" is right out of the Bible, I suspect. The ascended Christ appears as a man of bronze in Revelation chapter 1:15, and compare Daniel 10:6.

Well, hell, you can apply it to Brad Pitt too. Didja see how he appeared in "Fight Club?"

And, btw, Tim, long before a little hedgehog was named an echidna, the name was applied to a frightful monster, half woman, half serpent, who ate men raw and bore a brood of monsters to Typhon. The name means "she-viper." Check it out in any Greek mythology compendium, or go to the source, Hesiod.

-alga

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Sheila Herndon — 10 Apr 2000, 11:02 · follows Alice Turner

--- whorl-errors at lists.best.com wrote:

On the other hand maybe it's just

hard for Australians to

enjoy a series where a murderously malevolent

goddess is named after a cute

little marsupial like an echidna. (For those who

oh my goodness. big oops. all this time I had been thinking of Echidna as Echinoderm without realizing it.

David Wells — 10 Apr 2000, 21:48 · follows Sheila Herndon

From: "Alice Turner" <pei047 at attglobal.net>

Adam asked:

Is there textual evidence from TBOTLS that Silk may be in a two-headed

Pas body? (It's been a while since I reread it.)

(Replying to Adam) I wasn't suggesting that Silk is two-headed. Though this is a fascinating idea and quite in the spirit of previous Wolfe writing ("Did I forget to mention that the narrator is <unexpected adjective>? Oh, silly me!").

Typhon was grafted onto Piaton(?) to preserve his life. His excuse to Severian was (AFAIR, again) that his followers needed to see his face to keep their faith in him(*).

I don't buy young newt's clone theory: too easy, too trite.

I am cut to the quick. But even I wouldn't dignify my suggestion as a "theory" - merely a speculation.

And "easy, trite"? Curious. It would seem to me to be interesting indeed if Horn merged somehow with "Silk" and struggled with this - and the denial of it - for a book-and-a-half, before Silk himself turns up... ("With hilarious results", or perhaps not).

(old) newt (sadly not even remotely young anymore)

(*) Mind you, I'm not at all sure that I believe Typhon's explanation (assuming that I recall it correctly). Because:

- a) It's not entirely rational. The idea that his followers would cheer for him after a mysterious absence followed by his reappearance as a two-headed monster seems a triumph of optimism over common sense.
- b) It's not entirely rational. And Typhon probably knows this. Megalomaniacs are frequently (invariably?) extremely superstitious. But he may well not want to admit this to Severian.
- c) Typhon seems to me to be the kind of chap who will gratuitously lie just for kicks. I.e. the anti-Oreb. He is - after all - the Satan analog.

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