

Typhon's Duality

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 15 Aug 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/936>

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Seth Lombardi — 15 Aug 2000, 02:05

Okay - longtime lurker here. Must admit that I haven't read IGJ yet, but there was so much in the last few posts that I just couldn't hold back.

Okay, if Typhon was Neighbor-Spawned or related it would help finally explain the whole Why The Whorl Anyway question, but Typhon was such a seemingly sinister and human critter that I have a hard time buying it. His duality is parasitic and completely antithetical to both the Outsider and (I think - I've only read OBW) the semi-enlightened noble savage-ness of the Neighbors. Then again, the Neighbors ain't exactly what I'd call easy to relate to, so perhaps Typhon was some sort of proto-neighbor, from back when they were a bit more barbaric. On the other hand, I've always liked the way Wolfe makes most evil human created - even we seeded Erebus and such. (Uh...right?) All this talk of duality makes me think this - The vast majority of animal life on Blue has eight legs, instead of our four legged variety. It's no surprise then that the dominant humanoid life form on Blue has four legs instead of our two. It's like the place is bursting with duality. And I, uh...really don't know what to do with that. Anybody?

Oh, and on the subject of Silk's suicide - I really wouldn't be too surprised. Silk contemplating tossing himself from the airship and the ensuing conversation with Horn seemed to me to be the defining moment of the entire book of the long sun. Never trusted that Hyacinth woman or Silk for being so gaga for her. I mean - nice guy but sometimes not too bright, y'know? Then again, how many Wolfe protagonists really need to chill when it comes to the ladies? Severian uses em like kleenex and Silk is a human doormat. Poor dopes.

Seth

Jim Jordan — 21 Aug 2000, 15:23 · follows Seth Lombardi

At 09:05 PM 8/14/2000 CDT, you wrote:

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Welcome!

Dunno much about duality. Mebbe just a way of having a "different world" and no more.

Problem with Wolfe is that since so MUCH is significant, it is very easy to overread him!

As to the Neighbors, you'll find in IGJ that they have a darker past. They aren't "noble savages," but are now, perhaps, people who have finally matured beyond enslaving others and over vicious behavior. They are like the Green Man, perhaps.

If Old Pas were a Neighbor, then he came from that earlier, darker period Neighbor history. Yet, Pas's unnatural birth might simply mean he had been decanted, like Silk, instead of born. All the same, the Borski hypothesis has much to commend it: an army of chems and taluses to destroy the inhum.

No one picked up on my suggestion that it was Neighbor ships that brought the first inhum to the Whorl. Did that meet with general agreement?

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Like many of Wolfe's harlots, Hyacinth is the Church (Mary Magdelene of tradition), a fallen but redeemed woman, but one who has a lot of baggage. A female Severian. Silk's love for her in spite of this is Silk at his most Christ-like, not as "not too bright." Unlike Severian, who has his own problems and baggage, Silk is faithful when Hyacinth is not.

The scene where Silk is tempted to throw himself off the airship correlates to the second of Satan's temptations to Jesus, to cast himself down from the Temple, I believe. Silk manages to overcome the temptation, and then has a chat with one of his disciples. But it's all very subtle, since Wolfe is not just retelling the gospel narrative as an allegory. Silk has also just been tempted, or is about to be tempted (I forget which) to join Pas, which we can link with the third temptation, to bow down and worship Satan. But, at this point, is Pas evil or good? I don't think Wolfe provides the answer, yet, nor do we know whether Silk permitted himself to be downloaded to sit at Pas's right hand (do we?). Moreover, of course, these "temptations" don't come at the same place as they do in the gospel narratives.

But you are right, that Silk has been tempted with suicide. Yet, the death scene in IGJ still does not look like a suicide scene to me, but the aftermath of a battle.

Nutria

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