

Just finished BotSS

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Jul 2003

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Mooncalf — 02 Jul 2003, 00:47

Hi everyone, just signed up to the mailing list today. Have been reading Wolfe off and on for several years now but only now got around to the Short Sun series and wound up finishing RttW a few days ago. Ever since then i've been searching the web looking for reviews and such...out of curiosity to see what other people thought of it but also to see if it might shed some light on some of the more mysterious parts in the book/s.

Well once i arrived here i went back in the archives and read through many of the responses, beginning when RttW first came out and working my way up. Have to admit i was a bit disappointed at first by some of the disappointed reactions and, to that end, i wish to thank Marc Aramini in particular for his posts (though actually i came across him initially via his review on Amazon and only later found he posted here) for i think his amazing theories added much to my appreciation of the books - i.e., instead of wondering if some posters were correct that Wolfe had lost his touch or had lost interest in the series and therefore things didn't hold up very well upon close examination, i came away thinking just the opposite was true and that RttW was one of his deepest, most rewarding books yet.

As to my own impressions...well the odd thing about reading this series is that it took me a while to get into each of the books. In RttW it took the longest, and at somewhere between pages 100 and 150 i started to despair that i would ever get into it. Thankfully something clicked after that point though (perhaps i finally got the "hang" of Pig's dialect ;) and i found myself totally mesmerized once more by the style of writing and by the story itself. And that story, to me at least, seemed in large part to parallel how we (humanity in general) moved from belief in pagan gods to a belief in one true God, a God worthy of worship. It seemed as much a search for finding and bringing back the Outsider as it did for finding and bringing back Silk. I got more out of the books than just that, of course, but i think that was the aspect of it that fascinated me the most.

Anyway, even though i've read through a lot of the posts here over the last few days i still have a few questions/points that i haven't seen addressed yet (although i easily could have missed them since there was so much to go through...and you'll have to forgive me for being imprecise at times but i checked the books out at the library and only RttW still remains with me to help refresh my memory).

1. Is Scylla able at some point after inhabiting Oreb (perhaps due to proximity to the Neighbors or to the Narrator or due to the astral projections or all three) to transfer copies of herself into others? I wondered about this because of a couple strange observations made by the Narrator. One, when he suddenly blurts out that he feels bad for Beroep right after answering a question about Scylla - so did Scylla possess Aanvagen, who at first was described by Beroep as somewhat less than intelligent, but who during one of the courtroom scenes seems suddenly quite competent? Two, when the Narrator emphasizes the strange reaction that Marble had when she can see again, exclaiming "Oh, Scylla!". Did she become possessed right then and there? Oreb was present during that scene and, according to the Narrator, became alarmed and

flew off soon afterwards due to Marble's wild dancing. Also, at the very end when someone writes Good Fishing repeatedly, that sounds like something Scylla would say...so another person possessed by Scylla?

To me this would make sense with regard to the question of why would Scylla so willingly seek out her own death. If she had copied herself into others however then it seems she wouldn't mind so much killing off one of the copies.

2. Also what is the "apparent" age of the Narrator? During the first two books i got the distinct impression of an old man which i found curious since Silk wasn't much older than Horn. In IGJ there was one scene (though perhaps i misread it) at Inclito's dinner table where i believe someone says that the Narrator is the oldest one there, despite the presence of a woman who is the grandmother of a 15 yr old from her 4th marriage. Yet in the 3rd book the Narrator appears to be in his 40s, since at one point he talks to a shopkeeper who is described as over 40 (which i take it to mean in his 40s) and who says that the Narrator is about his own age (was this a clue put in to suggest that maybe there is something going on age-wise that needs looking into?).

I've thought about this and so far the only thing i can come up with is based upon Marc's theory that Horn goes into Babbie. Let's say then that when Horn and Silk merge that not only do their spirits combine but that it also somehow affects the age of Silk's body (combining their ages as well?). Now if that's the case i'm not sure why no one on the Whorl remarks about Silk's sudden aging. Maybe it wasn't so sudden after all and instead was more of a gradual process in terms of outward appearance, such as his hair turning white or whatever, and only when he returned to Blue for a while did it really start to become noticeable. And so by the time he leaves Gaon at the end of IGJ he appears an old and wizened ruler (if indeed that is how he appears and not a mistaken impression on my part). Then if Marc's hunch is correct and much of the Horn essence moves into Babbie during that strange scene at the very end of IGJ, perhaps the aging effect reverses starting at that point.

(As an aside, could it be that another clue to Babbie/Horn is that when Babbie attempts to speak during the Astral Projections he says "Huh-Huh-Huh"...maybe he's trying to say Horn? I know for instance he says Huh-Huh-Huh when he points to his mouth that one time. Indicating the missing horns or else trying to say that Horn is inside him?).

3. Finally, i have to say i agree with most of Marc's other theories as well. Particularly Blue being Urth. That would give a sort of symmetry to the trilogy (a trilogy in the sense of each series being a single book divided into various parts). Plus that way an implied but - for obvious reasons - unused title of the Short Sun books would be The Book of the New Urth. Again that gives the whole thing a nice symmetry to my way of thinking and it is a nice way to wrap up a trilogy by returning to where it all began. More than that though, it's just the sort of puzzle and implied title that i think would appeal to Wolfe.

Another reason i believe this theory rings true is because of the intentional misdirections. The most blatant of which (that i can recall offhand) is near the end where the Narrator says he would be willing to go outside and point out the star of the Red Sun Whorl to Juganu. However even if we were to suppose that Blue isn't Urth i still don't see how the Narrator would have any idea which star it might be. In my opinion at that moment he could have cared less about the actual location of the Red Sun for all he wanted to do was draw Juganu's attention away from Green and was using every psychological ploy he could think of to do so...even if it meant going outside and pointing at any old star and essentially saying "there, now stop thinking Green and start thinking Red". A related misdirection might be when someone (Hide?) says that the constellations don't look the same from the Red Sun Whorl. But since they could see the stars in the daytime that could account for seeing different stars and different star patterns. Or so i

would guess.

And yet another reason that i like this theory is that it gets rid of the awkward instantaneous astral traveling through light years of space, which i know some people had trouble with. Mainly though it just seems to fit well with the "trilogy" and to me it gives it an added layer of depth and more of a feel of completeness to it.

I was going to end off there but i remembered one more thing...

4. Just how much is Mucor involved behind the scenes in the Short Sun books? Any indication that she plays a bigger role than we've been led to believe? Also what leads the Narrator to describe her as seeming to be like a great general (or something similar) in OBW? LoL, i have to admit that at the time i toyed around half-seriously with the idea that maybe she possessed the narrator at that point and wrote the description herself.

Anyhow i guess that about wraps things up.

Take care,
Mooncalf