

Hero as Werwolf

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 25 Sep 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5494>

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Jonathan Goodwin — 25 Sep 2009, 15:44

I'm teaching Island of Dr. Death, etc. in an introduction to short fiction class this semester. We covered "Hero as Werwolf" yesterday, and I had some questions about it that came up during class.

I've looked as best I could through the archives, though I'm sure I must have missed several things. What I saw didn't address these questions, though again I'm sure it's been discussed. Anyway, here's the first one:

When the recording starts, here is what Paul hears:

"I am sorry to detain you, but there is reason to think that you have undergone a recent deviation from the `_optional_` development pattern. In a few minutes, it may be useful for us to review what is meant by '`_optimal_` development.' Look at the projection." (emphases mine)

It is such in both the Island collection and the Best of. I didn't check the original. I asked the class whether they thought it was a misprint, and, if not, why the two words were used. Most seemed to agree that it was not a misprint but were unsure of the implications. The possibility was raised that the masters intended to use homo sapiens (the "optional" development) to colonize the moon or similar (this being their "optimal" use) for resource extraction perhaps:

"Later one's peer group becomes, for a time, all-important--or nearly so. The boys and girls you see are attending a model school in Armstrong. Notice that no tint is used to mask the black of space above their airtents."

But then we remembered the woman that Paul kills speaking of how in "another year, everything would have been alright." Some thought that implied that she would be leaving, though others assumed that the masters had not created a needless egalitarian society and that she may have been supporting herself via prostitution.

We also discussed why it was Hugo De Vries, of all people, in four-dimensional projection, though this seems relatively clear.

Mo Holkar / UKG — 25 Sep 2009, 16:04 · in reply to Jonathan Goodwin

At 16:44 25/09/2009, you wrote:

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Hmm, I tend to believe that it is a misprint, and that it should be "optimal" both times. The literal reading would be uncharacteristically clumsy: the second sentence wouldn't flow on logically from the first. I don't think "optional development" is sufficiently meaningful to be genuine.

I guess we'll never know, though!

Mo

~ # ~

WolfeWiki -- a wiki about Gene Wolfe
<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

Jonathan Goodwin — 25 Sep 2009, 17:47 · in reply to Mo Holkar / UKG

If someone has the original printing, or could check the other reprints, and they all match, well, it's not final evidence that it's not a misprint; but I would imagine that someone would have queried him about it along the way. I think it makes sense as is, personally, and is a characteristically Wolfean touch.

Also, the OED entry on "werewolf" notes: "The first element has usually been identified with OE. wer man WERE n.1, but the form were- in place of wer- (cf. however were- and wer{asg}ild WERGELD), and the variants in war-, var-, makes this somewhat doubtful. Evidence for the real currency of the word (chiefly in the {beta} and {gamma} forms) is rare, and confined to Sc., after the 17th cent. In modern use it has been revived through folk-lore studies, and until recently the most usual form has been werewolf, and occas. wehrwolf from German.] "

The first entry from 1000 has "werewolf" as the spelling.

On Fri, Sep 25, 2009 at 11:04 AM, Mo Holkar / UKG <lists at ukg.co.uk> wrote:
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James Wynn — 25 Sep 2009, 18:39 · in reply to Jonathan Goodwin

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I'm going to hypothesize that the reason "werewolf" has the extra "e" is because the pronunciation requirements for an Old English speaker to say the "ehr" sound in front of a "w". I'm not offering any proof of this. It is just that the translation "man-wolf" is just too compelling in absence of an alternative.

J.