

Short Story 63: The Hero as Werwolf

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 09 May 2014

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6546>

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Marc Aramini — 09 May 2014, 19:16

The Hero as Werwolf

"The Hero as Werwolf" appeared in 1975 in The New Improved Sun and is reprinted in *The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories and Other Stories*.

SUMMARY:

In approximately 2060 with the divergence of humanity into a telepathic and peaceful master upperclass and a bestial and predatory "unraised" human class, Paul hunts the masters for food. Sitting in on a meeting in the park in which he blends in with the Masters, Paul fails to understand the lecture but dwells instead on watching his prey. He selects a fat man and his date for the night, a girl with pearl eyes dressed in vines "the color of love" with "a serpent of gold support[ing] her breasts." Hoping to use his disguise and bell to attract them, they are prematurely attacked by an old man and his daughter, who wields a knife. The female master uses her telekinetically controlled unliving serpent to trip the girl while the vines loosen and decay to allow her to run. Paul snaps her necks and argues with the other "true" humans over who will keep their food for the night. He takes the dying female to his house turret; she continues to talk after her neck is snapped. He denies that she is dead and toys with her a bit. After a few telekinetic attempts on him such as animating his blankets and raising her body to try to escape, she succumbs to death, but throughout the discussion thoughts of the girl and getting food for her in a predatory domestic partnership consume Paul.

He finds the family of two nearby, living in a bus. After some hostile exchanges, the father begins trying to talk of his daughter's many fine qualities, though she cannot speak and is feral. He speaks of his family's misfortunes and hereditary problems which prevented them from being changed and accepted as masters, and reveals how sickness has killed most livestock animals and the farmland been destroyed by the masters (Paul had never conceived that people could even live off the land). He tells why he hasn't found a man for Janie yet, but seems keen on the idea that Paul take her. He does, but the father tells him he will take her back if Paul is not pleased.

Later, Janie and Paul disguise themselves as masters and hunt down a boy, splitting up to catch him in the air shafts. After Paul breaks the boys neck, they are detected and detained by the building. A lecture on optimal development begins, and he manages to pry open the door. Janie escapes and Paul almost does, but the dying boys mental powers make the rod slip, catching his foot in the door. He tells the boy he is dead, at which point the rod falls tot he ground, and he exhorts Janie to take action; she bites off his foot, her tears washing away his blood.

SETTING:

With the animals raised to semi-consciousness and the branching of the human species into several evolutionary tracks as well as the disappearance of hard currency and credit, this

seems to me the same world found in “Sonya, Crane Wessleman, and Kittee”, or one very similar. This time, men return to an animalistic state when their resources are destroyed, or are raised to psionic awareness, with metalinguistic discourse and psychokinetic powers.

Why the loss of valid farmland? This is revealed in the callous treatment the “humans” receive at the hands of the master as Emmitt Pendleton describes. His family, suffering from genetic defects like diabetes and mental problems which have manifested in his daughter Jane, have been denied the “change.” After the widespread genetic modification of humanity, it is clear that old style food is no longer necessary. Farm lands are destroyed by machines (“They had forgot about us, you see”), medicine production such as insulin stops, and livestock perishes after a “sickness” strikes. Certainly terraforming of the moon continues apace, via details revealed at the end: “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 air tent”.

In the opening scene, Paul does notice that “the moon was up” in the sky — so we have to ask ourselves if the story is set on Earth or if Paul does not understand that he might currently be on the changed moon. In either case, there are rockets and lunar colonies of the masters by this point. There are “canyons between the buildings” — this doesn’t seem like a normal alley description. There is a noon and a sun that enters Paul’s house turret from eight windows. However, Paul describes how he escaped the master’s ghost house by overturning the machine testing him for genetic aberrations and jumping out the sixth floor of a building, saved by landing in a tree. I imagine chances of surviving a jump from a sixth floor window are higher on the moon than on earth. The flora in the park include night blooming flowers and trees which glow with a self-generated blue light.

LITERARY REFERENCES:

The story begins with the epigraph from Kipling’s “Hunting Song of the Seeonee Pack” from The Jungle Book . While Mowgli must leave his pack at that point in the book, Paul has just found a pack to hunt with in Wolfe’s story.

As the dawn was breaking the Sambhur belled --

Once, twice and again!

And a doe leaped up, and a doe leaped up

From the pond in the wood where the wild deer sup.

This I, scouting alone, beheld,

Once, twice, and again!

As the dawn was breaking the Sambhur belled --

Once, twice and again!

And a wolf stole back, and a wolf stole back

To carry the word to the waiting Pack,

And we sought and we found and we bayed on his track

Once, twice and again!

As the dawn was breaking the Wolf-Pack yelled

Once, twice and again!

Feet in the jungle that leave no mark!

Eyes that can see in the dark -- the dark!

Tongue -- give tongue to it! Hark! O Hark!

Once, twice and again!

Of course this poem occurs after the first section of the Jungle Book, in which Mowgli, raised by animals and living his life as one of them, is confronted with the fact that he is a man and his pack consists of dogs. He leaves the pack after Shere Khan's disapproval is given voice: "I am weary of this man-wolf folly." This man-wolf talk is evoked in the spelling werwolf, of which Wolfe says: "I reverted to the original spelling to point up the meaning of the word: ?manwolf." We would be more apt to say "wolfman," though the ideas conveyed are distinctly different. — the manwolf envisioned by the Anglos and Saxons was a man to be feared as wolves were feared, and for the same reasons. Thus the predatory figure of Paul as the viewpoint character. The story is to some degree how he comes to have his own family pack and create a meaningful unit in an extremely predatory and unkind existence.

THE UPPER AND UNDER CLASS:

According to Emmitt Pendleton's words, the story is set just before 2060.

In discussing the text, it might be useful to determine if the upper class with their "genetic heritage revised for intellection and peace" are actually distinct in origin from the "humans" — Paul and his newfound family, the predators. The policeman who walks around has been raised from something like a dog: "the policeman bobbed his hairy head, grinning, basking in the recognition, the approval, of those who had raised him from animality. .. the policeman was too stupid, too silly, to be deceived by appearances as his masters were." With these beasts given psuedosentience to do menial tasks, the masters can focus on books and abstract ideals (Pendleton recounts how his fathers pleas for food result in him being hit with a book).

Of course the narrative slant towards Paul as "human" creates relativistic statements like "His own place was that in which his mother had borne him, a place high in a house built when humans were the masters." It is clear the masters consider themselves humans as well, and Paul and his genome just a bad dream to be repressed and forgotten. Paul claims they are afraid to raze the old buildings for fear of bringing back to conscious memory and life the old, degenerate times.

The statements of the woman with her broken neck are sometimes a bit cryptic: "I didn't think you really existed . — I'm dead, you know. — Dead. Never, never, never. Another year, and everything would have been all right. — I thought you were all gone — all gone long ago, like a bad dream."

He becomes angered when she says "Strange evolution. Man become food for men," - the concept and vocabulary of evolution is foreign to him. What do the masters eat? Is the raspberry powder that freezes, taken from its moon shaped box, solely a drug which can be inhaled with no nutritive properties? Clearly the masters consider themselves human and the

old style genome something better forgotten.

GENETICS AND THE STORY:

The primary question in the text becomes one of the actual genetic process that allowed the “masters” these psionic powers, to live after their necks are broken, to survive without crops or animals to eat. Interestingly enough, at the end of the story, a four dimensional picture of Hugo de Vries appears, showing his development until death, and then back to rebirth as a fissioning cell. De Vries work with the Evening Primrose was a bit different than Darwinian gradual evolution in that it posited rapid change through mutation. (He also worked with plant hybridization and polyploidy, which I believe are vital to understanding Wolfe’s *Short Sun* universe in any meaningful way). De Vries work deals in some degree with Saltation — very large changes from one generation to the next, which we see at work here in the story, where the under and upper class both believe themselves to be human but are so different as to be practically different species.

The trees have also been modified now to exude their own light: “night blooming flowers scented the park air, and the trees lining the paths glowed with self-generated blue light — in the city, beyond the last hedge, the great buildings new and old were mountains lit from within.”

Joan Gordon's study on Wolfe seems to conclude that humans have mixed with alien DNA in the story, though from textual evidence I don't feel there is enough support for this. If we could feasibly tie this to a continuity that included “Blue Mouse”, “Sonya, Crane Wessleman, and Kittee”, and “Silhouette” with its bizarre planet of dark foliage, then we might be able to make this claim, but in the story itself there is little indication of actual alien alteration: humans took a technological leap at roughly the same time that the planet's resources were depleted and ruined (there is some evidence that technology changed very rapidly, however).

JUXTAPOSITION AS NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE:

This story shows Wolfe's tendency to join non-sequitur events in one scene — when Paul taunts the dying female master, his thoughts gravitate to his excitement over meeting Janie and her father, though the confrontation is marked with hostility. He imagines a domestic life with her as he boasts and teases the dying female master. When Janie and Paul are trapped in the elevator shaft after killing the boy, “optimal development” is reviewed: affection for one's mother, replaced by a peer-group, culminating in finding a life purpose. The example used is that of physician, and during this time Paul implores Janie to bite through his foot, as a wolf would escape, since he cannot do it himself, serving as a physician that cuts away a diseased portion with her primitive teeth.

Wolfe's tendency to place two unrelated things together in narrative continuously sometimes creates a tenuous symbolic relationship.

WOLFE’S COMMENTS:

?I was trying to get the reader to think about the real nature of love between man and woman. In the first place, the girl in "The Hero as Werewolf" is retarded and cannot speak. And, secondly, in the end she has to damage very badly the man she loves in order to set him free. I think I was trying to say, first, that you must not think that the person you love has to be a whole lot like you in order for that love to be real and working. And second, that we all, if we are going to be honest, have to hurt people in order to do them good. We have to tear away parts of them in order to do them good.

NAMES:

Pendleton means overhanging settlement, for whatever that is worth. I could find no real meaning for the unusual last name Gorous except its similarity to the French term for werewolf, "loup-garou" — which is a redundancy to some degree, as garou seems related to the German garoul - werewolf.

If Wolfe was actually considering "love" as his primary theme here, then Paul might reference the St. Paul's rather infamous diatribe on Love/charity — it might hope all things and endure all things, but he forgot "Love bites off legs when necessary".

COMMENTARY:

Authorial sympathy is sometimes a dangerous thing, and as an artist I think this is one of those stories where the viewpoint character creates a false sense of authorial endorsement. Of course the title, "The Hero as Werewolf" does imply that Paul is "heroic", but it cannot be an unqualified assessment. The problem with the masters is that they do not love imperfections and seek to stamp them out completely. The problem with the "humans" is of course that they have become bestial and ignorant in their quest to survive. As far as Wolfe is concerned, the underclass predator is a more compelling viewpoint: to make one sympathetic for a cannibalistic, ignorant, and animalistic group is only possible in light of the oppression they have suffered. Physically worthless versus mentally atrophied — there cannot be a true endorsement except for the base ability to survive and possibly love: "Evan a bad man can love his child. You remember that, because it's true." Have the masters forgotten love? Would they be a worthwhile step in evolution, concerned as they are with the desuetude and destruction of the planet's resources, if they cared for those who were deemed unfit instead of simply "forgetting" about them?

Perhaps the most heroic thing about Paul is that he hasn't given up on his dreams and fantasizes about returning with food for his woman.

The love in the story is feral, and the kindness the father advises cruel: if you let her play with her food before it dies, the girl will come to like you. To help him escape, she eats his foot off. The question is if this act symbolically mirrors what the masters have done to escape their base mortality: cut off the id, the primitive, and what they perceive to be flaws — is there any difference in these two acts? The blood of his leg is washed away by her tears — thus the real feeling of affection she has for him. Here, cannibalism is a form of escape from an inescapable situation — there simply is no other way.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS:

Have the masters hybridized with foreign or alien DNA to achieve the psionic mastery, or is this purely human? Will everything be fine "in a year" because the masters are leaving in their rockets to the moon and beyond? Are we actually on the moon here?

Do these new humans foreshadow the Green Man in any meaningful way, being able to survive without farmland and animals?

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The cannibalism is obvious, seen in "Tracking Song", "A Traveler in Desert Lands", *New Sun* — but in particular the raising of animals to something more, carried out to the next level, elevating humans to ones who clearly do not have to subsist on regular food, immune to viral infections like warts, living for a time as long as they believe that they are alive, with money just a dim memory, takes the pseudo socialist explorations of his 70s fiction just a bit further into the future. "Tracking Song" could be an example of further animal species raised to complete sentience, or even a vastly divergent evolution on a colonized satellite or planet — we will be confronting this soon, and that story also asks what is truly human. The predatory survival of humanity will be echoed years and years later in the short story "King Rat", but thematically "Tracking Song" and "The Hero as Werwolf" seem to be closely related: exploring that forgotten animal part of humanity from the top and bottom, respectively, and asking what humanity should ultimately entail.

Fernando Gouvea — 10 May 2014, 17:32 · in reply to Marc Aramini

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Marc Aramini — 12 May 2014, 16:49 · in reply to Fernando Gouvea

I meant to respond long ago, I apologize. This scene is one in which a sinful woman anoints the feet of the Theanthropos (let's go with High Christology here, though we are still in the synoptic gospels) and, even though she has great sins, is forgiven, as verses 47 and 48 imply:

"I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

It is not that Paul in the story is sinless, but that this act is one of a debased and depraved individual achieving that great love, and making them human. Thus, Paul and Janie can love, and the masters are more like the Pharisees who want to forget and shun those who are seen as "lesser" and "sinful." Paul, imperfect, can care for Janie with all her feral and mental problems, and she, too can love him enough to eat his foot off when necessary.

On Sat, May 10, 2014 at 10:32 AM, Fernando Gouvea <fqgouvea at colby.edu> wrote:
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I suspect that Wolfe is more sympathetic to Paul than most of us. The "masters" strike me as deeply dehumanized, having set aside many of the features of human embodiment. Better to be feral?

Fernando

On 5/9/2014 3:16 PM, Marc Aramini wrote:

The Hero as Werwolf

"The Hero as Werewolf" appeared in 1975 in *The New Improved Sun* and is reprinted in **The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories and Other Stories**.

SUMMARY:

In approximately 2060 with the divergence of humanity into a telepathic and peaceful master upperclass and a bestial and predatory "unraised" human class, Paul hunts the masters for food. Sitting in on a meeting in the park in which he blends in with the Masters, Paul fails to understand the lecture but dwells instead on watching his prey. He selects a fat man and his date for the night, a girl with pearl eyes dressed in vines "the color of love" with "a serpent of gold support[ing] her breasts." Hoping to use his disguise and bell to attract them, they are prematurely attacked by an old man and his daughter, who wields a knife. The female master uses her telekinetically controlled unliving serpent to trip the girl while the vines loosen and decay to allow her to run. Paul snaps her necks and argues with the other "true" humans over who will keep their food for the night. He takes the dying female to his house turret; she continues to talk after her neck is snapped. He denies that she is dead and toys with her a bit. After a few telekinetic attempts on him such as animating his blankets and raising her body to try to escape, she succumbs to death, but throughout the discussion thoughts of the girl and getting food for her in a predatory domestic partnership consume Paul.

He finds the family of two nearby, living in a bus. After some hostile exchanges, the father begins trying to talk of his daughter's many fine qualities, though she cannot speak and is feral. He speaks of his family's misfortunes and hereditary problems which prevented them from being changed and accepted as masters, and reveals how sickness has killed most livestock animals and the farmland been destroyed by the masters (Paul had never conceived that people could even live off the land). He tells why he hasn't found a man for Janie yet, but seems keen on the idea that Paul take her. He does, but the father tells him he will take her back if Paul is not pleased.

Later, Janie and Paul disguise themselves as masters and hunt down a boy, splitting up to catch him in the air shafts. After Paul breaks the boy's neck, they are detected and detained by the building. A lecture on optimal development begins, and he manages to pry open the door. Janie escapes and Paul almost does, but the dying boy's mental powers make the rod slip, catching his foot in the door. He tells the boy he is dead, at which point the rod falls to the ground, and he exhorts Janie to take action; she bites off his foot, her tears washing away his blood.

SETTING:

With the animals raised to semi-consciousness and the branching of the human species into several evolutionary tracks as well as the disappearance of hard currency and credit, this seems to me the same world found in "Sonya, Crane Wessleman, and Kittee", or one very similar. This time, men return to an animalistic state when their resources are destroyed, or are raised to psionic awareness, with metalinguistic discourse and psychokinetic powers.

Why the loss of valid farmland? This is revealed in the callous treatment the "humans" receive at the hands of the master as Emmitt Pendleton

describes. His family, suffering from genetic defects like diabetes and mental problems which have manifested in his daughter Jane, have been denied the “change.” After the widespread genetic modification of humanity, it is clear that old style food is no longer necessary. Farm lands are destroyed by machines (“They had forgot about us, you see”), medicine production such as insulin stops, and livestock perishes after a “sickness” strikes. Certainly terraforming of the moon continues apace, via details revealed at the end: “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 air tent”.

In the opening scene, Paul does notice that “the moon was up” in the sky ? so we have to ask ourselves if the story is set on Earth or if Paul does not understand that he might currently be on the changed moon. In either case, there are rockets and lunar colonies of the masters by this point. There are “canyons between the buildings” — this doesn’t seem like a normal alley description. There is a noon and a sun that enters Paul’s house turret from eight windows. However, Paul describes how he escaped the master’s ghost house by overturning the machine testing him for genetic aberrations and jumping out the sixth floor of a building, saved by landing in a tree. I imagine chances of surviving a jump from a sixth floor window are higher on the moon than on earth. The flora in the park include night blooming flowers and trees which glow with a self-generated blue light.

LITERARY REFERENCES:

The story begins with the epigraph from Kipling’s “Hunting Song of the Seeonee Pack” from *The Jungle Book* . While Mowgli must leave his pack at that point in the book, Paul has just found a pack to hunt with in Wolfe’s story.

As the dawn was breaking the Sambhur belled --

Once, twice and again!

And a doe leaped up, and a doe leaped up

From the pond in the wood where the wild deer sup.

This I, scouting alone, beheld,

Once, twice, and again!

As the dawn was breaking the Sambhur belled --

Once, twice and again!

And a wolf stole back, and a wolf stole back

To carry the word to the waiting Pack,

And we sought and we found and we bayed on his track

Once, twice and again!

As the dawn was breaking the Wolf-Pack yelled

Once, twice and again!

Feet in the jungle that leave no mark!

Eyes that can see in the dark -- the dark!

Tongue -- give tongue to it! Hark! O Hark!

Once, twice and again!

Of course this poem occurs after the first section of the Jungle Book, in which Mowgli, raised by animals and living his life as one of them, is confronted with the fact that he is a man and his pack consists of dogs. He leaves the pack after Shere Khan's disapproval is given voice: "I am weary of this man-wolf folly." This man-wolf talk is evoked in the spelling werwolf, of which Wolfe says: "I reverted to the original spelling to point up the meaning of the word: ?manwolf." We would be more apt to say "wolfman," though the ideas conveyed are distinctly different. — the manwolf envisioned by the Anglos and Saxons was a man to be feared as wolves were feared, and for the same reasons. Thus the predatory figure of Paul as the viewpoint character. The story is to some degree how he comes to have his own family pack and create a meaningful unit in an extremely predatory and unkind existence.

THE UPPER AND UNDER CLASS:

According to Emmitt Pendleton's words, the story is set just before 2060.

In discussing the text, it might be useful to determine if the upper class with their "genetic heritage revised for intellection and peace" are actually distinct in origin from the "humans" — Paul and his newfound family, the predators. The policeman who walks around has been raised from something like a dog: "the policeman bobbed his hairy head, grinning, basking in the recognition, the approval, of those who had raised him from animality. .. the policeman was too stupid, too silly, to be deceived by appearances as his masters were." With these beasts given psuedosentience to do menial tasks, the masters can focus on books and abstract ideals (Pendleton recounts how his fathers pleas for food result in him being hit with a book).

Of course the narrative slant towards Paul as "human" creates relativistic statements like "His own place was that in which his mother had borne him, a place high in a house built when humans were the masters." It is clear the masters consider themselves humans as well, and Paul and his genome just a bad dream to be repressed and forgotten. Paul claims they are afraid to raze the old buildings for fear of bringing back to conscious memory and life the old, degenerate times.

The statements of the woman with her broken neck are sometimes a bit cryptic: "I didn't think you really existed . — I'm dead, you know. — Dead. Never, never, never. Another year, and everything would have been all right. — I thought you were all gone — all gone long ago, like a bad dream."

He becomes angered when she says "Strange evolution. Man become food for men," - the concept and vocabulary of evolution is foreign to him. What do

the masters eat? Is the raspberry powder that freezes, taken from its moon shaped box, solely a drug which can be inhaled with no nutritive properties? Clearly the masters consider themselves human and the old style genome something better forgotten.

GENETICS AND THE STORY:

The primary question in the text becomes one of the actual genetic process that allowed the “masters” these psionic powers, to live after their necks are broken, to survive without crops or animals to eat. Interestingly enough, at the end of the story, a four dimensional picture of Hugo de Vries appears, showing his development until death, and then back to rebirth as a fissioning cell. De Vries work with the Evening Primrose was a bit different than Darwinian gradual evolution in that it posited rapid change through mutation. (He also worked with plant hybridization and polyploidy, which I believe are vital to understanding Wolfe’s Short Sun universe in any meaningful way). De Vries work deals in some degree with Saltation — very large changes from one generation to the next, which we see at work here in the story, where the under and upper class both believe themselves to be human but are so different as to be practically different species.

The trees have also been modified now to exude their own light: “night blooming flowers scented the park air, and the trees lining the paths glowed with self-generated blue light — in the city, beyond the last hedge, the great buildings new and old were mountains lit from within.”

Joan Gordon's study on Wolfe seems to conclude that humans have mixed with alien DNA in the story, though from textual evidence I don't feel there is enough support for this. If we could feasibly tie this to a continuity that included “Blue Mouse”, “Sonya, Crane Wessleman, and Kittee”, and “Silhouette” with its bizarre planet of dark foliage, then we might be able to make this claim, but in the story itself there is little indication of actual alien alteration: humans took a technological leap at roughly the same time that the planet's resources were depleted and ruined (there is some evidence that technology changed very rapidly, however).

JUXTAPOSITION AS NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE:

This story shows Wolfe's tendency to join non-sequitur events in one scene — when Paul taunts the dying female master, his thoughts gravitate to his excitement over meeting Janie and her father, though the confrontation is marked with hostility. He imagines a domestic life with her as he boasts and teases the dying female master. When Janie and Paul are trapped in the elevator shaft after killing the boy, “optimal development” is reviewed: affection for one's mother, replaced by a peer-group, culminating in finding a life purpose. The example used is that of physician, and during this time Paul implores Janie to bite through his foot, as a wolf would escape, since he cannot do it himself, serving as a physician that cuts away a diseased portion with her primitive teeth.

Wolfe's tendency to place two unrelated things together in narrative continuously sometimes creates a tenuous symbolic relationship.

WOLFE’S COMMENTS:

?I was trying to get the reader to think about the real nature of love

between man and woman. In the first place, the girl in "The Hero as Werewolf" is retarded and cannot speak. And, secondly, in the end she has to damage very badly the man she loves in order to set him free. I think I was trying to say, first, that you must not think that the person you love has to be a whole lot like you in order for that love to be real and working. And second, that we all, if we are going to be honest, have to hurt people in order to do them good. We have to tear away parts of them in order to do them good.

NAMES:

Pendleton means overhanging settlement, for whatever that is worth. I could find no real meaning for the unusual last name Gorous except its similarity to the French term for werewolf, "loup-garou" — which is a redundancy to some degree, as garou seems related to the German garoul - werewolf.

If Wolfe was actually considering "love" as his primary theme here, then Paul might reference the St. Paul's rather infamous diatribe on Love/charity — it might hope all things and endure all things, but he forgot "Love bites off legs when necessary".

COMMENTARY:

Authorial sympathy is sometimes a dangerous thing, and as an artist I think this is one of those stories where the viewpoint character creates a false sense of authorial endorsement. Of course the title, "The Hero as Werewolf" does imply that Paul is "heroic", but it cannot be an unqualified assessment. The problem with the masters is that they do not love imperfections and seek to stamp them out completely. The problem with the "humans" is of course that they have become bestial and ignorant in their quest to survive. As far as Wolfe is concerned, the underclass predator is a more compelling viewpoint: to make one sympathetic for a cannibalistic, ignorant, and animalistic group is only possible in light of the oppression they have suffered. Physically worthless versus mentally atrophied — there cannot be a true endorsement except for the base ability to survive and possibly love: "Evan a bad man can love his child. You remember that, because it's true." Have the masters forgotten love? Would they be a worthwhile step in evolution, concerned as they are with the desuetude and destruction of the planet's resources, if they cared for those who were deemed unfit instead of simply "forgetting" about them?

Perhaps the most heroic thing about Paul is that he hasn't given up on his dreams and fantasizes about returning with food for his woman.

The love in the story is feral, and the kindness the father advises cruel: if you let her play with her food before it dies, the girl will come to like you. To help him escape, she eats his foot off. The question is if this act symbolically mirrors what the masters have done to escape their base mortality: cut off the id, the primitive, and what they perceive to be flaws — is there any difference in these two acts? The blood of his leg is washed away by her tears — thus the real feeling of affection she has for him. Here, cannibalism is a form of escape from an inescapable situation? there simply is no other way.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS:

Have the masters hybridized with foreign or alien DNA to achieve the psionic mastery, or is this purely human? Will everything be fine “in a year” because the masters are leaving in their rockets to the moon and beyond? Are we actually on the moon here?

Do these new humans foreshadow the Green Man in any meaningful way, being able to survive without farmland and animals?

I am fairly certain on the last page the optional development pattern mentioned by the tutoring voice is a typo, because the voice immediately says “it may be useful for us to review what is meant by 'optimal development'”. Typos happen even in Wolfe. Optimal should have been used in both cases.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER WORKS:

The cannibalism is obvious, seen in “Tracking Song”, “A Traveler in Desert Lands”, *New Sun* — but in particular the raising of animals to something more, carried out to the next level, elevating humans to ones who clearly do not have to subsist on regular food, immune to viral infections like warts, living for a time as long as they believe that they are alive, with money just a dim memory, takes the pseudo socialist explorations of his 70s fiction just a bit further into the future. “Tracking Song” could be an example of further animal species raised to complete sentience, or even a vastly divergent evolution on a colonized satellite or planet — we will be confronting this soon, and that story also asks what is truly human. The predatory survival of humanity will be echoed years and years later in the short story “King Rat”, but thematically “Tracking Song” and “The Hero as Werewolf” seem to be closely related: exploring that forgotten animal part of humanity from the top and bottom, respectively, and asking what humanity should ultimately entail.
