

Notes from a Second Reading

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1129>

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Dave Lebling — 11 Feb 2001, 12:03

A few minor notes during a second reading:

1) When Horn and Pig talk about names, Pig's first suggestion for a name for himself is "Cotton." Later, "Ox," "Bull," and "Owl." Finally "Pig." Any significance to the first, especially? Also, Pig mentions at some point around here (which I can't find again, drat!) that he is from Nabaeantann. To me, his "Gaelic" is more Scots (Robert Burns, e.g.) than Irish or Welsh. The fliers (and this is just my impression) came across as Irish or Welsh.

1a) During this exchange, Pig laughingly refers to a "blind pig," which Silk doesn't realize is a term for a speakeasy. A reference to Pig's past troubles with "grog."

2) It's quite obvious to me that RttW, and to a lesser extent TBotSS as a whole, is a long suicide note. Clearly Silk was in the process of committing suicide due to his grief at Hyacinth's death when Horn's spirit was infused in his body. The book is a race between Silk's cure and his recovery of control of his mind.

2a) If Pig "killed" Silk and lost his "een" afterwards, it was the quickest recovery from such massive trauma on record. Horn was added to the dying Silk, woke up, wandered out into the light, fell asleep, awoke on a darkday, and met Pig the same day. If Pig had lost his "een" shortly after an attack on Silk, he would still be bleeding. Also, it's stated explicitly that this killing occurred in a manteion that attracted Pig as a looter due to the large size of its doors. Silk and Hyacinth lived in a "manse" also described as a "cottage." Sorry, Mr. Borski, but this one just doesn't fly. On the other hand, the suggestion that Pig is a small-size godling is a good one; there is no need for it (as Horn/Silk explains, he can as easily be a super-embryo like Silk) but it feels right. Probably the godlings of whatever size are the result of genetic manipulation.

2b) Somehow there is a unity among Hyacinth, Seawrack, and Kypris which I'm not sure I fully apprehend. The point about Silk going off with Seawrack, whom he has never met, is a good one. Are Hyacinth and Seawrack both avatars of Kypris? Is Seawrack an acceptable substitute for Hyacinth because she is so magically seductive that Silk will forget Hyacinth? Is she a replacement for Hyacinth, or a successor? Is it Horn's love for Seawrack that survives in Silk somehow? Wolfe's view of mind-sharing seems to allow for a blending of characteristics over the long term, so I wouldn't rule it out. Remora's couplet on p. 408 certainly makes me think of reincarnation or some other form of survival after death. Hyacinth may have been trodden down, yet she lives.

2c) The business with the rings still has me confused. I didn't take notes on it, but the ring Horn wears changes size (at one point it fits his thumb only, later a finger) and appearance throughout the narrative.

3) "Thyone's son," apparently another avatar of the Outsider, is the Greek Dionysus, son of Semele and Zeus. Semele's name was changed to Thyone when Dionysus replaced Hestia in

the Olympian pantheon. According to Graves, the name change was to avoid angering Hera. Silk seems to identify all unnamed gods with the Outsider.

4) When Horn et al. are prisoners in Dorp, there is a reference (p 143) to Cijfer fetching "a bio" to help Jahlee. I find this an interesting, if baffling, statement. There are few chems on Blue. Does this mean Cijfer (intriguing name!) is a chem? The context is Horn wondering if there is another inhumu in the house. Curious.

5) p 183. Horn/Silk is wondering how he got to Green from Judge Hamer's sellaria with no inhumu present. He gives three possibilities: 1) Fava possessing Vadsig, 2) the presence of an unknown inhumu, 3) assistance by the Neighbors, and 4) a possibility he is "loath to mention." Anyone know what that possibility is? Is it, as suggested by several posters, that Horn/Silk himself is an inhumu? I hate this suggestion, personally, but there is a lot of circumstantial evidence in its favor (and against it as well). The evidence in favor has been posted. The evidence against includes the fact that Horn/Silk does eat, sometimes a fair amount (soup, sandwiches, wine, etc.), that various people see him up close (Tansy bandages his wounded arm and comments on the scar from the white-headed ones bite, Olivine sees him naked or nearly so, etc.). Also, the fact that he is still somewhat lame from a twenty-year-old broken ankle is not usual, especially given the rather rough way he treated it immediately after.

6) The Secret of the Inhumu. I feel a little let down here. We figured this one out in book one. It doesn't live up to some of the remarks made about it by Horn himself. As we've pointed out, how would humanity in general knowing the secret hurt the inhumu? Why would the inhumu care one way or another if the secret came out? It's so terrible that Nettle has to leave Blue because Silk tells it to her. Why? What possible defense against the inhumu does knowing the secret enable? If anything it might influence humans to be more compassionate towards creatures who are in some ways their own children, the behavior we see from Horn (to some extent) and Silk.

6a) The most interesting part of this is that the Neighbors introduced inhumu to the Whorl to see what human-inhumu would be like, as a sort of test of whether humans deserved to have Blue and Green. So, they did this test, liked the results, and gave Blue to humanity in the form of Horn, perhaps because he was the first human to approach an accord with an inhumu (Krait).

6b) How is Jahlee Horn's daughter, other than by adoption? Krait is certainly Horn's son (not grandson) in the sense that he shares Sinew's blood and mind, but Jahlee? I hate neat coincidences of the sort that provides Jahlee, Krait's mother, as the randomly chosen inhumu dug up from the plaza in Gaon. Even Shakespeare would blush at that coincidence.

Enough for now.

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