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The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 12 Feb 2001

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akt — 12 Feb 2001, 12:00

From mantis:

This scene is a series of painful shocks: the death of Jahlee and the unspoken denunciation of Horn/Silk.

The death of Jahlee bugs alga more than anything else in RTTW, so I'm surprised she hasn't mentioned it yet <g>. Here is how I see it right now:

it is very much like the situation in HUCKLEBERRY FINN, where Twain found

himself with a problem. The runaway slave and the white trash boy, happy

and free together on their river journey . . . are floating toward the slave block. Going the wrong way. (IIRC, Twain himself put the half-finished manuscript aside for many years, unable to work around this

problem; he finally solved it by introducing Tom Sawyer, who made a burlesque of the whole thing).

But what if Huck had to deal with a more realistic, less forgiving situation? Now we switch back to BOTSS, and how happy we were when Horn/Silk called Jahlee his daughter at the end of IGJ! And they continued to "flow down the river" toward Lizard Island and disaster.

But why? Why is Jahlee so bent on it? Well, judging by what happens, we

can guess a certain ill intent. And what is Horn/Silk's problem that he

cannot dissuade her: is he simply too soft-hearted, to the point that he is

being taken in by "Honest John"?

Big "Blade Runner" and other snip.

I don't have an actual physical copy of RttW handy, so I can't be specific on details. But I really do have problems with the book--a few posts back on the Urth list, I defended the fifth book of the first series as adding a great deal to what had come before. I don't feel that way about RttW, however. A lot of it seems rather cursory to me, an author's half-hearted attempt at tying up loose ends (and yes, the comparison with -Huckleberry Finn- is valid; that book also famously suffers from author fatigue). And mantis also is right about my indignation re Jahlee. The last few paragraphs of IGJ seemed so beautiful to me, rather like Chaucer, with that thrilling last line to boot. To turn her into a B-movie predator at the last moment seems to me to betray the immense and thoughtful journey Wolfe had previously taken us on wrt the relationship of the inhuman and the humans and--agreeing with some of my favorite adversaries here--the mythic nature of the demon. Some of the intelligent discussion on this list concerning Nettle's

double shock, first regarding Silk's "rights," and second that he would bring an inhuma to the island under any circumstances, considering their history (hers and Horn's), has modified my opinion. but I still consider Jahlee's attack and death crude and unworthy. Nor do I think that some of the other business (the godling, the drafting of Seawrack--and Nettle too--at the last moment. etc.) seems very thought-through. More like Wolfe just wanted to be done with the whole damn thing with a few Hollywood effects (the godling) just thrown in. And, for me, Pig's Scots accent was pathetic, an irritating, amateurish caricature. Come to think of it, I didn't much care for Pig, though I felt that I was being forced to by the author. OK, I'm cranky, but I didn't feel this book worked very well as a grand wind-up to the series.

-alga

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