

RTTW spoilers: alga's complaints

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 13 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1155>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 13 Feb 2001, 20:16

Putting aside the godling issue as the lesser, I'm still working on how alga is bugged by Jahlee's death.

Aside about Twain: well, we might agree he had some authorial mishap there, but the thing is that TOM SAWYER, with all its slickness, is still considered a juvenile novel, whereas flawed HUCKLEBERRY FINN is literature. And nobody talks about the other novel (or two?) that features these fellows.

Aside about RTTW's ending seeming to exhibit authorial fatigue. Oh, really? If he were tired of the characters I'd expect a retirement of some sort, happily ever after or simply dead--I'd hardly expect him to launch them on a starship!

Now I know we are not talking about something as simple as a happy ending, and yet the yearning for a happy ending might play a part. Around these parts we've had discussions among a few people with regard to TBOTNS, that basically boil down to: "But =why= do all the people have to die as Urth is flooded into Ushas?" Some people are really, really bothered by this--that the "victory" at the ending is so tainted by the megadeath, to the point that it ain't really happy at all . . . and we have valid debates over whether Severian is more anti-christ than saviour.

So I can understand a disappointment like that: the belief that somehow, the hero was going to complete the quest =and= avoid the awful penalties, but then the quest is finished and the consequences are worse than imagined.

Can you agree that the situation of Jahlee and Horn is like Jim and Huck floating down the river?

Here's another analogy, this time from film: you liked "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" pretty well. SPOILER WARNING!

As much as we would like a 100% happy ending to that fine film, after a certain point we would be perfectly willing to accept a 50% happy ending (i.e., the younger couple), yet even that is snatched away by a device which seems quite arbitrary, raising all sorts of questions (nevertheless, I have my theories, of course: mainly that she really =is= who she jokingly said she was at the restaurant). Now then, does this diminish the movie? I certainly don't think so, and I doubt that you do.

Of course you are entitled to your opinions. You don't have to like the death of Jahlee--fwiw, I don't like it, but I see that it flows from what came before it. You think it perfunctory, and if it were written in the 3rd person authorial voice I might agree with you, but it is written by the man who did it, and it is too painful for him to write any more than he does. It seems to me that the moment was an explosion, where Jahlee shed her mask and was a vampire, and Silk, spiritual son of Pike the Vampire Slayer, suddenly burst into violent action. A side of the

narrator he is not at all happy about; an aspect which seems to betray all that he has been working towards.

=mantis=

Sirius Fiction

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

Spectacled Bear — 14 Feb 2001, 12:04 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

At 20:16 2001-02-13 -0800, Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

Putting aside the godling issue as the lesser, I'm still working on how alga is bugged by Jahlee's death.

Let me have a go.

1. Jahlee thinks of herself as a beautiful woman - a bit of a vamp, one might say. Compare her teasing Hide, and probably others, plus the guard on Urth, and her general attitude.

2. The Rajan is a) charismatic b) powerful c) the first man who has ever treated her with kindness, let alone respect. If alga or anyone else can make a case for her *not* falling in love with him, I'd like to see it.

3. She meets Nettle. Nettle is her great rival. Even if she was human, how safe would Nettle? But Jahlee isn't human, however kind Horn has been to her, however much she wants to be (and Nettle *is*, which would inspire bitterness and envy in a better person than Jahlee). Without wishing to appear speciesist, she *is* a blood drinking reptile. And Horn loves Nettle. He really does, though he may not have been very good at showing it, and Jahlee can see that.

Given the above, if you were Jahlee, could *you* resist biting Nettle?

And if you were Horn, how would you feel when you saw it?

The original Horn, dour, impulsive, and knowing the inhumi only as vampiric monsters, would be right in there. Horn who has come to know Jahlee might feel more charitably towards her, but the betrayal will surely make this *more* horrific for him. There's hardly an aspect of his character, Horn or Silk, that isn't going to be outraged. He loves Nettle. He brought Jahlee to Lizard, and she betrayed his trust - both her guilt and his own, projected, are going to add vehemence to his attack. It's significant that he doesn't calmly use the lethal weapon he carries. This is personal. I've spent a paragraph arguing for the plausibility of Horn attacking the inhuma who's biting his wife, but I don't really need to, I think.

Finally, though he didn't intend murder (I'm fairly sure of that), she's hardly going to get better. There isn't much place in a happy ending for a jealous vampire, however much we want there to be.

...

Aside about RTTW's ending seeming to exhibit authorial fatigue. Oh, really?

Yes, that's nonsense. Sorry, alga, my unicellular friend, but what I mean is that I don't agree with it at all. I found the resolution of the book to be as satisfying as advertised, which is very interesting considering it only involved a change of point of view - "does Horn know he's Silk?" is a nonsensical question when looked at closely. It's a contradiction, and the resolution is that

only Silk can be Silk. It is more than a change of perspective as well, of course - Silk recovers.

If he were tired of the characters I'd expect a retirement of some sort, happily ever after or simply dead--I'd hardly expect him to launch them on a starship!

I must admit, as an aside to the aside, that of all the possible things that I could have guessed might happen, Nettle setting out on a starship was not one of them!

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Can you agree that the situation of Jahlee and Horn is like Jim and Huck floating down the river?

It sounds like it to me. There was always going to be trouble when he got home. I wish there wasn't, but that isn't realistic.

...

Of course you are entitled to your opinions. You don't have to like the death of Jahlee--fwiw, I don't like it, but I see that it flows from what came before it. You think it perfunctory, and if it were written in the 3rd person authorial voice I might agree with you, but it is written by the man who did it, and it is too painful for him to write any more than he does. It seems to me that the moment was an explosion, where Jahlee shed her mask and was a vampire, and Silk, spiritual son of Pike the Vampire Slayer, suddenly burst into violent action. A side of the narrator he is not at all happy about; an aspect which seems to betray all that he has been working towards.

And he stops writing. For a compulsive scribbler like Horn, this is an indication of a highly traumatic experience.

Spectacled Bear.

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