

Scylla

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 18 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1190>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

akt — 18 Feb 2001, 13:11

Endy,

The Scylla favored by Wolfe is the sea-monster in your second description (she is also associated with the lamia, which accounts for the snakey bits). Together with her sidekick Charybdis (a feminized whirlpool who sucked in boats) she became a formidable obstacle for sailors--she's described in the Odyssey (Book VII) as a yelping six-headed dog-like monster who snatches sailors and devours them. Both Jason of the Argo and Odysseus had to get past her. Some of the many descriptions of her by other writers are even more horrible (and unpleasant for her, one would think). The truly nausea-inducing portrait of Sin in Paradise Lost--with her own sidekick, Death, the other guardian of Hell, she pursues Satan across the void (Book II)--is based closely on the nastiest of these. Scylla and Charybdis, with the Clashing Rocks, are traditionally considered to be off the coast of Sicily, which was in turn associated with Hell. A euphemism, for centuries, was "sailing to Sicily." Sorry to be so pedantic, but on one level Wolfe (and our Scylla herself) is certainly playing on the literary aspects of this double portrait.

-alga

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