

This little Piggie went wee, wee, wee all the way to the stars

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 19 Feb 2001

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Robert Borski — 19 Feb 2001, 12:34

Whatever happens to the entity I see variously as Pig, Babbie, or Tartaros? Given the multivalent and/or composite nature of many of the characters in SHORT SUN, this may not be all that easy a question to answer.

Pig, when last seen (and when he at last sees us), is recovering in the post-operative bay of the West Pole. Possibly, he is still aboard the Whorl when it relaunched. If so, his godling status may confer upon him additional benefits, as well as responsibilities. He might also join the newly-returned paterfamilias of Mainframe, Passilk, sitting at his right hand as the loyal son he has always been. As Pig notes earlier, "'Tis me h'only kin."

But what if Pig/Tartaros has returned to Blue in Babbie form? Wolfe very cryptically has Daisy note Babbie's presence at the novel's end with "the tall, white-haired man Hoof and his brother call Father"; the hus, she tells us, is carrying two sacks of supplies on his shoulders. But in the final paragraph, when Daisy notes who's aboard the relaunched Whorl, she cites only Silk, Seawrack, Nettle, Maytera Marble, and Oreb. Are we thus to assume that Babbie never joined the starfarers on their new journey?

The answer, I believe, lies in Mucor. Babbie, when we first meet him, has been given to Mucor by the captain of a foreign boat. (in my opinion Captain Passilk of the good ship Whorl). Later, after he's abandoned by Horn in Pajarocu, he returns to her, and after Hornsilk returns to New Viron, he once again absents himself to visit Mucor's rock.

Then when we have the Tartaros angle. At Blood's mansion Mucor manifests himself to the blind godling and he is stunned by her beauty. As he tells Horn, "Bonnie she was, bucky. Beautiful ter me, ter auld Pig." Of course, he's never seen another woman. (I'll avoid the obvious eye-of-the-beholder joke.)

So doesn't it seem likely that Babbie/Pig has gone back to Mucor, as much the Odyssean figure as Horn and Passilk--only instead of settling for Penelope, deciding to spend the rest of his days with Blue's equivalent of Circe?

Robert Borski

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