

Horn Dies

The Whorl list — 17 messages, 6 voices, 26 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1230>

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James Jordan — 26 Feb 2001, 10:11

3.2.2 His death is the necessary step that makes it possible
for Horn to bring corn back to the starving people of New
Viron -- the Wasteland,

THANK YOU! It all makes sense to me now. Yes, Horn has died. Got it. Thank you. I'd missed this.

And it raises more thoughts for those of us sympathetic to Wolfe's Christian standpoint. Silk's own death/resurrection does seem to lead to a shift from animal sacrifices to bread & wine. We don't see this (as I recall) in the Long Sun series, but Olivine is aware of it. But then Horn recapitulates this experience, and comes to be "in union with Silk," and says that the bread and wine he offers with Olivine is "his" body and blood. Recall that according to Paul in 1 Corinthians, the bread represents both Jesus and ALSO the Church. I now suspect that this is part of what is going on.

Finally, I strongly suspect that the answer to the question of how the book ends, one way or another, is that as both Silk and Horn have "died," yet both continue to live IN SILK'S BODY.

Patera Nutria

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

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Feb 2001, 10:22 · follows James Jordan

I wrote:
... isn't a Return to the World another word for
resurrection?

I know, I know. It's not a wor, it's a phrase.

Blatt, blatt, blatt.

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

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Feb 2001, 10:21 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

PatRat wrote:

(quoting moi)

3.2.2 His death is the necessary step that makes it possible
for Horn to bring corn back to the starving people of New
Viron -- the Wasteland,

THANK YOU!

Y'welcome.

Yes, Horn has died.

Right -- but he got better. Sort of...

And it raises more thoughts for those of us sympathetic to Wolfe's Christian standpoint.

That's you, me, and Alex ... is anyone else on this list explicitly Christian? (Is anyone but me on this list explicitly Catholic?)

Silk's own death/resurrection does seem to lead to a shift from animal sacrifices to bread & wine. We don't see this (as I recall) in the Long Sun series [...]

I seem to recall (having reread the series in January) something about Silk deciding not to sacrifice animals anymore? Certainly one of the major turning points in his own spiritual journey is the decision not to sacrifice Oreb (though the decision is sort of, kind of made for him?).

But then Horn recapitulates this experience,

'sfunny: Horn's sacrifice in IGJ reminded me very powerfully of the Pendragon's supper in THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH (which itself was apparently designed to recall not only the Passover but a scene in a George MacDonald book I haven't read. Actually, I haven't read any MacDonald at all...). I vaguely wonder if this is deliberate.

and comes to be "in union with Silk," and says that the bread and wine he offers with Olivine is "his" body and blood.

Sounds familiar, eh? 8*)

Recall that according to Paul in 1 Corinthians, the bread represents both Jesus and ALSO the Church.

Well, the Bread becomes (or represents for the heretical Protestants in the audience -- JOKING!) the Body of Christ; and the Church is also the Body of Christ; the Body of Christ is undivided, present whole in each wafer; ergo, the Body of Christ is eating the Body of Christ in order to become more closely united with/more like Christ.

We now return to the question of the Alzabo. Devouring Thecla's flesh, with the help of that strange creature's gland, Severian becomes united with Thecla. Ditto the inheritance of the Autarchy. (What would happen, one wonders, if a reigning Autarch were accidentally killed and devoured at one of the feasts held by Vodalus or his predecessors/successors? A whole lot of Autarchs at once?)

So ... Is little Severian's father actually present in the alzabo? [Does an alzabo have Severian's-father-nature? Five pounds of flax.]

I now suspect that this is part of what is going on.

I've been looking for this sort of connection in Wolfe for -- gulp! -- goin' on 20 years now -- I read SWORD within days of its hitting the shelves & the resonance of Typhon's temptation of Severian was so blatant that I wound up going back and noticing "Oh, he brings back the dead, he turns water into wine ... Duh ..." So when I see bread in close proximity to wine, the connection is there.

More fun for me, in many ways, is noticing Wolfe's non- Biblical sources -- for example, Silk as a pretty darned blatant homage or pastiche or whatever of GKC's Father Brown. (I strongly suspect that Chesterton stands to Wolfe much as MacDonald is Lewis: "I fancy that I have never

written a book in which I did not quote MacDonald.")

Finally, I strongly suspect that the answer to the question of how the book ends, one way or another, is that as both Silk and Horn have "died," yet both continue to live IN SILK'S BODY.

Bingo.

And isn't a Return to the World another word for resurrection?

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Alex David Groce — 26 Feb 2001, 15:02 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Blattid:

That's you, me, and Alex ... is anyone else on this list explicitly Christian? (Is _anyone_ but me on this list explicitly Catholic?)

I am, and as a fairly recent convert should probably be expected to be obnoxious about it or something...

More fun for me, in many ways, is noticing Wolfe's non- Biblical sources -- for example, Silk as a pretty darned blatant homage or pastiche or whatever of GKC's Father Brown. (I strongly suspect that Chesterton stands to Wolfe much as MacDonald is Lewis: "I fancy that I have never written a book in which I did not quote MacDonald.")

Although, unless I missed something (which seems fairly certain), there is nothing that yells "G. K." in BOTNS itself.

On a sidenote: even if the Horn in SilkHorn is a Thecla-ish ghost, is it really that hard to understand why Nettle goes back to the Whorl, even if she sees our narrator purely as Silk? She is a widow whose children are grown (two have married, one has left the planet, for goodness' sake). She's also the coauthor of the Book of Silk. Silk shows up. She and Horn left one world because Silk told them to, is this not perhaps an easier trip to make, to return "home"?

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

--

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

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 26 Feb 2001, 13:14 · follows Alex David Groce

Alex wrote:

Blattid:

That's you, me, and Alex ... is anyone else on this list explicitly Christian? (Is _anyone_ but me on this list explicitly Catholic?)

I am

Right, which is why I put "and Alex" in the paragraph you quoted 8*)

and as a fairly recent convert should probably be expected to be obnoxious about it or something...

Obnoxious, no, but I think we need a little more participation that focuses on the (often explicit) religious side of Mr Wolfe's writing. I often wonder what non-Christians see in him, but then I wonder that about Lewis too (and have atheist friends who are positively rabid, or rabidly positive, about Narnia, so go figure).

Although, unless I missed something (which seems fairly certain), there is nothing that yells "G. K." in BOTNS itself.

I dunno. I always thought the identity of the Autarch was sort of Man-who-was-Sunday-ish.

On a sidenote: even if the Horn in SilkHorn is a Thecla-ish ghost, is it really that hard to understand why Nettle goes back to the Whorl, even if she sees our narrator purely as Silk?

Well, it's certainly a good question why -- I think your (deleted) explanations are good, but certainly the Next Generation Lizard- dwellers don't go to a great deal of trouble to make it explicit.

I think I'm beginning to agree with those who think Mr Wolfe's riddle-me-this writing tactics are getting a bit out of hand. I don't want everything spelt out for me, and I appreciate his belief that you shouldn't have to be told something twice -- but most of us grew up on pulp writers and the like, okay? Maybe there's a happy medium?

Sigh. I love the stuff Mr Wolfe writes about (even the kinda gross stuff). I love the way he writes on a word by word, sentence by sentence level. I just wish he didn't feel called upon to make it so hard to get from the one to the other.

--Dan'l

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James Jordan — 26 Feb 2001, 16:26 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Blattid blatted:

And isn't a Return to the World another word for resurrection?

Maybe. Or maybe an ascension, since in some sense "Silk" has just been "resurrected." In a sense, Horn has "gone up to heaven" in answer to the prayer for "daily" bread. Of course, that definitely mixes the metaphor, since the Whorl is originally Egypt under Pharaoh, from which Moses delivers the people, and even more it is the people of God under the Jewish leaders (Ayuntamiento) and Romans (Pas etc.), from which Jesus delivers those who trust Him. At the same time, since Horn goes UP to the Whorl as a result of dying, the Whorl seems to shift into a partial image of heaven. Since Old Pas has himself died and been resurrected into New Pas (Constantine-like?), the Whorl can shift in (one) of its symbolic meanings -- especially since Wolfe is not writing any kind of close allegory anyway.

FWIW: I'm a Reformed (Calvinist) former minister, now theologian; but on the sacramental (real presence, not just symbol) side of that coterie. So, I've got no problem with Wolfe's symbolism.

Patera Nutria

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Alex David Groce — 26 Feb 2001, 17:33 · follows James Jordan

Blattid spoke:

That's you, me, and Alex ... is anyone else on this list explicitly Christian? (Is _anyone_ but me on this list explicitly Catholic?)

I am

Right, which is why I put "and Alex" in the paragraph you quoted 8*)

Ah, I was replying to the "explicitly Catholic" part, which wasn't true when I joined the list, but is now.

Obnoxious, no, but I think we need a little more participation that focuses on the (often explicit) religious side of Mr Wolfe's writing. I often wonder what non-Christians see in him, but then I wonder that about Lewis too (and have atheist friends who are positively rabid, or rabidly positive, about Narnia, so go figure).

Of the "off the list" Wolfe fans I know, three are Catholic (and one of these is only a rather lukewarm Wolfe fan), two Protestant, and five some gamut of atheist, agnostic, non-dogmatic mysticism (don't ask me), etc., but certainly in Ursula K. LeGuin's category of "definitely NOT Christian."

Dante, for instance, certainly has his share of great admirers, even devotees, who do not share his theology or metaphysics (Borges frex). The same holds for, say, Eliot (although to a lesser degree, and with more controversy). I would be surprised to find Wolfe fans who don't have the background to place the references at all, though.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

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Fernando Q. Gouvea — 26 Feb 2001, 18:00 · follows Alex David Groce

**** On Mon, 26 Feb 2001 10:21:04 -0800, "Dan'I Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com> said:

Dan'I> That's you, me, and Alex ... is anyone else on this list explicitly Dan'I> Christian? (Is _anyone_ but me on this list explicitly Catholic?)

I am a Christian, but not a Catholic (though some folks might claim you have to look pretty hard to tell the difference).

**** On Mon, 26 Feb 2001 09:58:23 -0500, "Patrick O'Leary" <poleary at cecom.com> said:

Patrick> Ok, Horn does indeed exist somehow in Silk at the end. Alga's Patrick> comment on Wolfe's PC model of possession is very sound, I Patrick> think. But I love the irony: We think we've been reading a book Patrick> written by Horn denying he is Silk. And, really, it is a book Patrick> written by Silk denying he is Silk.

There's also a symmetry: BotLS is a book about Silk written by Horn, while BotSS is a book about Horn (mostly) written by Silk (mostly).

Fernando

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Two percent of zero is almost nothing.

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Fernando Q. Gouvea — 26 Feb 2001, 18:00 · follows Fernando Q. Gouvea

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Feb 2001, 15:35 · follows Fernando Q. Gouvea

Responding to my observation that a "return to the world"

might be a resurrection, JaJo wrote:

Maybe. Or maybe an ascension, since in some sense "Silk" has just been "resurrected." In a sense, Horn has "gone up to heaven" in answer to the prayer for "daily" bread.

Which lets us mix the symbolism in yet another way -- Horn is very much Silk's spiritual son; after the death on Green, the son and the father are one in a rather literal way.

Or: ... Horn-the-Son ascends into Hell (green) and dies there, then reunites with Silk-the-Father.
Or: Horn-the-Son must ascend into the Whorl so that the Silkhorn-the-Spirit might return and

bring the blessing of corn. Or:...

The point being that I think all these resonances are clearly there, but no one is a 'ruling metaphor.'

FWIW: I'm a Reformed (Calvinist) former minister, now theologian;

When I first fastread this, I read it as meaning: "I used to be a Calvinist minister, but now I've reformed." 8*)

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Robert Borski — 26 Feb 2001, 21:46 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

archy's cousin having t-y-p-e-d:

<Which lets us mix the symbolism in yet another way -- Horn is very much Silk's spiritual son; after the death on Green, the son and the father are one in a rather literal way.>

<Or: ... Horn-the-Son ascends into Hell (green) and dies there, then reunites with Silk-the-Father. Or: Horn-the-Son must ascend into the Whorl so that the Silkhorn-the-Spirit might return and bring the blessing of corn. Or:... The point being that I think all these resonances are clearly there, but no one is a 'ruling metaphor.'>

I still think a lot of you are neglecting to factor in Big Daddy Pas in the final meltdown/merging of Horn and Silk at the series' denouement. In my opinion there's at least as much of him as the other two, if not more.

Witness the following exchange between Oreb and Horn:

"Where did you go, Oreb?"

"Find god."

"I see. Passilk? I think that's what the surgeon called him. Did you find him, and is that why you returned to me?" "Find Silk." (OBW, 369)

It sure seems likely to me that M'to, as someone in the direct employ of Mainframe, would be a little better informed to comment on this than any one else, and even Horn, at one point in IGJ, claims that "Silk is an aspect of Pas now." (202)

I'd therefore be a little more comfortable with Blattid's symbolic mix above if it cited Pas as father, Silk as son (since he's resurrected in the flesh), and Horn as Holy Ghost (since it's his spirit that's tossed into the mix). That Pas has been redeemed by the incorporation of Silk seems irrefutable; we get the sense of a similar transformation in his daughter, who for most of the series is known by the name of a monster (Scylla), but goes to her grave on Urth named as a saint (Cilinia).

And yet lest we take this Pas-Silk-Horn troika for something other than it really is--say, the literal embodiment of the Outsider--Wolfe gives us Quadrifons, perhaps, at least for the purposes of the SHORT SUN triptych, endorsing medieval theologian Peter Lombard's doctrine of quaternity, which posits God as a separate entity from the three persons of the Trinity.

Robert Borski

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Alex David Groce — 27 Feb 2001, 00:23 · follows Robert Borski

Robert Borski wrote:

And yet lest we take this Pas-Silk-Horn troika for something other than it really is--say, the literal embodiment of the Outsider--Wolfe gives us Quadrifons, perhaps, at least for the purposes of the SHORT SUN triptych, endorsing medieval theologian Peter Lombard's doctrine of quaternity, which posits God as a separate entity from the three persons of the Trinity.

Sounds good. I don't see really where quaternity comes in here, though unless we're, as I don't think Robert is. taking Wolfe to be writing hard-nosed allegory. Robert's notion is another mapping that seems clearly intended, but again, there isn't a canonical "now which one is the Holy Spirit?" answer. Some characters might fit the question well (Mucor, for instance, come to think of it), and others poorly (it would require a strange reading to suggest that Sinew "has Holy Spirit nature").

It seems to me that Wolfe doesn't use Trinitarian motifs to suggest that these characters are the Trinity in any sense. Just as in New Sun Severian's miracles, though patterned on Christ, don't make him the Son. On the one hand, seeing Severian's "imitation of Christ" is certainly more important to understanding BOTNS than, say, seeing the Claudius similarities, but it's not an equation. Is Silk the Son? Is Silk Moses? No. Is Pas the Father? No. Nor is Oreb literally the Holy Spirit, or Hyacinth the church as the bride of Christ.

The characters are themselves, but they also act in the patterns of the Christian story (and, though it's less thematically central, they go about taking on the roles of Ulysses and Odin and others as well...) I suspect that Wolfe doesn't even see this necessarily as a literary device. If certain historical events are also the essential story of the universe, it is not a stretch to expect a God who acts in history to "retell" echoes of that story throughout time. Or, as Chesterton says about God being "young enough" to enjoy telling the Sun to rise every day, not getting bored with it as we would*, Wolfe believes the Outsider could go on telling stories about exodus, the blind seeing, the lame walking, and death and resurrection.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

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james.kellar — 27 Feb 2001, 08:50 · follows Alex David Groce

Blattid:

That's you, me, and Alex ... is anyone else on this list explicitly Christian? (Is anyone but me on this list explicitly Catholic?)

count me in in the Catholic side!

Just a thought - What do you think about the possibility that Wolfe's work is intended, if not to convert people, but at least to make them think more favourably of his own religion?

gerbil

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James Jordan — 27 Feb 2001, 08:51 · follows james.kellar

At 08:50 AM 2/27/2001 +0000, you wrote:

Just a thought - What do you think about the possibility that Wolfe's work is intended, if not to convert people, but at least to make them think more favourably of his own religion?

gerbil

I don't really think so. Long ago I wrote to ask him if he thought of himself as a Christian writer, and he wrote back to say that no, he is a writer who is a Christian. I don't think "evangelization" is part of his intention, though I'm sure he'd be happy if it were part of the result. BTW, I also asked him, in the light of *Peace,* if he thought of himself in any degree as a Southern writer (a la Walker Percy), and he responded by saying he that is more of an urban than a rural writer.

FWIW

Pat. Nut.

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James Jordan — 27 Feb 2001, 09:24 · follows James Jordan

At 12:23 AM 2/27/2001 -0500, you wrote:

The characters are themselves, but they also act in the patterns of the Christian story (and, though it's less thematically central, they go about taking on the roles of Ulysses and Odin and others as well...) I suspect that Wolfe doesn't even see this necessarily as a literary device. If certain historical events are also the essential story of the universe, it is not a stretch to expect a God who acts in history to "retell" echoes of that story throughout time. Or, as Chesterton says about God being "young enough" to enjoy telling the Sun to rise every day, not getting bored with it as we would*, Wolfe believes the Outsider could go on telling stories about exodus, the blind seeing, the lame walking, and death and resurrection.

This is called "typology," and it is the way Christians read the Old Testament: various events and sequences of events anticipate by analogy the events in Jesus' life. Similarly, events after Jesus' life reflect backwards the events of His life. No surprise that Wolfe sees things this way -- he's doubtless heard many homilies in church along these lines -- especially in a series of novels that are fairly explicitly "Biblical."

Pat. Nut.

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 27 Feb 2001, 09:39 · follows James Jordan

Robski wrote:

archy's cousin having t-y-p-e-d:

why thank you robert
perhaps i shd try writing that way and

...Naaah.

Anyway, Robert cites my list of resonances, and comments:

I still think a lot of you are neglecting to factor in
Big Daddy Pas in the final meltdown/merging of Horn and
Silk at the series' denouement.

I agree: in my case, because I'm simply not prepared to deal with it yet. Pas' role changes so radically at the end of LONG that I'm not quite ready to deal with it, especially as it merges into Silkhorn. (Other than the rather grotesque obviousness of his being yet another Wolfe character who dies and comes back from the dead.)

In my opinion there's at least as much of him as the other
two, if not more.

I dunno. The amalgam _talks_ like Silk.

**

Robert then cites this:

"Where did you go, Oreb?"
"Find god."
"I see. Passilk? I think that's what the surgeon called
him. Did you find him, and is that why you returned to me?"
"Find Silk." (OBW, 369)

Like many of Oreb's utterances, these allow of more than one interpretation, but any good interpretation has to allow for the presence of Scylla. What "god" would Scylla be looking for? One that could help her with her little problem -- ideally, the Mother, though perhaps she isn't yet aware that the Mother exists as such. I would say the most obvious, if not necessarily the best, interpretation is this: Scylla-in-Oreb went looking for a place where she could download ("Find god"), didn't find it, and returned to Silk{Pas}Horn.

.. even Horn, ... claims that "Silk is an aspect of Pas now."

Um... _who_ makes that claim? Isn't that Passilkhorn or whatever? And what does it mean in this case for Silk to be an aspect of Pas? I might be wrong, but the impression I got (from the exchange with Kypris in _Exodus_) was that Pas was too damaged to completely resurrect from the hidden pieces -- perhaps too many of them were lost. He couldn't build a complete or unified identity. So he wanted (or Kypris wanted it for him) to upload Silk as a whole identity, and then merge the pieces of Pas into that. The resultant would, I think, actually be more Silk than Pas -- Silk with bits of Pas merged in. [O'course, Pas being a very dominant person, this probably wouldn't be quite so smooth...]

I'd therefore be a little more comfortable with Blattid's
symbolic mix above if it cited Pas as father, Silk as son
(since he's resurrected in the flesh), and Horn as Holy Ghost

Then for heavens' sake, include it! I said, and you even quoted,

... I think all these resonances are
clearly there, but no one is a 'ruling metaphor.'

...which means that there is plenty of room for yet other resonances, including the one you cite. Once put in front of me, it's a perfectly obvious and good resonance.

Observation, though: all three (Passilkhorn) have, in one sense or another, died and been resurrected in the flesh,
-- in the same flesh, in fact -- Silk's. I would hesitantly suggest that no human character in Wolfe is likely to be a strong representation of either the Father or the Spirit; Catholicism and Christianity in general suggests that we imitate Christ, not His altar-egos.

[...sorry...]

I would say, then, that we look to the Outsider as always the Father-figure in these books; various human characters as Son-figures; and anything, but especially anything not- human that seems to in some way dispense Grace (as Oreb) as Spirit-figures.

And yet lest we take this Pas-Silk-Horn troika for something other than it really is--say, the literal embodiment of the Outsider--Wolfe gives us Quadrifons, perhaps, at least for the purposes of the SHORT SUN triptych, endorsing medieval theologian Peter Lombard's doctrine of quaternity, which posits God as a separate entity from the three persons of the Trinity.

Most unlikely. As a Catholic, Wolfe is likely to buy into large chunks of Thomism; in particular, one might check into the Summa Contra Gentiles, sections 1.18ff., that God is His own Essence and that Essence and Existence are one in God.

(Oy. Thomistic existentialism. Any Maritain fans in the audience? and if so, why?)

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james.kellar — 27 Feb 2001, 16:24 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

At 08:50 AM 2/27/2001 +0000, I wrote:
Just a thought - What do you think about the possibility that Wolfe's work is intended, if not to convert people, but at least to make them think more favourably of his own religion?

gerbil

and then Nutria replied

I don't really think so. Long ago I wrote to ask him if he thought of himself as a Christian writer, and he wrote back to say that no, he is a writer who is a Christian. I don't think "evangelization" is part of his intention, though I'm sure he'd be happy if it were part of the result. BTW, I also asked him, in the light of *Peace,* if he thought of himself in any degree as a Southern writer (a la Walker Percy), and he responded by saying he that is more of an urban than a rural writer.

That makes sense. I suppose that, from the point of view of a writer, Catholicism is a good background to be coming from as there's such a rich variety of symbolism to draw on!

gerbil

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