

Seawrack's boy toy

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 20 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1275>

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.

Dan Parmenter — 20 Mar 2001, 11:19

From: "Robert Borski" <rborski at charter.net>
Somewhat related question to Adam, Blattid, or Alex, whoever cares to answer: why, in your opinion, does the Mother (rather a benign figure compared to Greater Scylla) give Seawrack to Horn? And how does she acquire the mermaid--especially, if, as I've argued, she's really Screadhbhuidhe, a special talent?

Part of the "Screadhbhuidhe" hypothesis is that it fits Vironese naming conventions. Actually, what you wrote was this:

From: "Robert Borski" <rborski at charter.net>
Subject: Seawrack's Real Name
Date: Fri, 8 Sep 2000 12:51:10 -0500
Given the naming convention for women of the Whorl (since I believe Seawrack is a special talent), the name should be floral, with a possible nod to something in the broader seaweed family.

But wait, the floral-girl-name convention is a Vironese yes? Not everyone in the Whorl uses it (e.g. Grandecitta, the Flyers, not sure about the Trivs to be honest). As it happens, we meet several Vironese "special talents", but it's natural that they would have those names. I'm not saying you're wrong, but it seems a bit flimsy to me. I have no idea how it's pronounced, but is it really much of a tongue-twister? It looks like one, but so do plenty of English language words that are easy enough to pronounce but look frightful (e.g. "wrought-iron").

But more importantly, why do you and everyone else cling to this notion that Seawrack was given to Horn? I've mentioned this before and now I have the citation. This is during an early meeting with Krait, who comments upon Horn's "lovely woman":

"Not mine," I told him.
"Not now, and not ever."
Seawrack herself said "But he belongs to me." She joined me at the fiit if the mast and linked her arm in mine. "The Mother gave him to me. What of it?"
(OWB, hb, pp. 175)

So is Seawrack deluded? And what is her special talent? Her gills? Her song? I suppose that a cargo that included a siren or two wouldn't be a bad thing to have on hand if you know your destination has its own mythic sea monster.

Perhaps there's another Wolfean parallel in play with regard to Seawrack's relationship to the Mother. The theme of adoption with a twist: The Mother adopted Seawrack and Horn will soon adopt Krait and others. If a shape-changing monster can adopt a human being, then why can't a human being adopt a shape-changing monster?

BTW, in examining the archives, a few of us (including Alga I think) speculated that the Urthly

Cumaeen seemed a likely Inhumana. Nothing I've read in subsequent BotSS books seems to contradict this and certain things seem to shore it up even. I haven't thought it through fully, but is it possible that the ancient mind that she and Merryn were attempting to contact in the Fomelhaut system was one of these sea-monsters? Or perhaps the Mother herself? Perhaps Merryn's first encounter with the astral Jahlee caused her to seek out similar minds. I know, it's all idle speculation, but it seems like a nice fit, and it makes the whole astral travel aspect of BotSS seem a bit less fan-fic-esque as well as shedding light on what remains to me, one of the more obscure aspects of BotNS (namely, "what on Urth is up with the Witches?"). Mind you, even if the astral stuff is mere Wolfean self-indulgence, it still makes for some great reading. P 221 of IGJ has a classic Lupine passage where he our hero speculates about the possible effects of "chimerical" weapons. I grinned ear to ear when I read that.

Finally, Borski also opined:

Are we to make anything of the similarity in names "Cilinia" and "Scylla"? Or is this just more happy coincidence?

Given the Urthly Saint-based naming convention, it's a coincidence, but a very satisfying, artful one.

Shellac

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

Robert Borski — 20 Mar 2001, 14:15 · follows Dan Parmenter

Dastardly Dan Parmeter having argued:

<BTW, in examining the archives, a few of us (including Alga I think) speculated that the Urthly Cumaeen seemed a likely Inhumana. Nothing I've read in subsequent BotSS books seems to contradict this and certain things seem to shore it up even.>

I'm surprised this argument wasn't resurrected by its proponents earlier, citing the "Merryn had problems with animals too" line, which seems to support the notion--especially if you buy into my theory that Merryn is the biological daughter of the Cumaeen.

Unfortunately, the Cumaeen-as-inhumana argument seems severely undercut by the following passage from URTH (p. 357), where Severian is talking to the alien Ossipago:

"...the Cumaeen, she was a Hierodule, like you. Father Inire told me."

Famulimus and Barbatus nodded.

Unless, of course, you're now arguing that the inhumi are creatures of Yesod...

Robert Borski

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