

The Ending; Some Spoilers for _Engine Summer_

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 12 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1347>

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.

David Lebling — 12 Apr 2001, 14:10

From: Adam Stephanides <adamsteph at earthlink.net>
[Re: Merry] But we did, I think. Jahlee says she doesn't know who the boy [Severian] is, and Merry says "'He's my brother. We're brothers and sisters, we witches and the torturers.'" (267) There's a bit of ambiguity here, as her words could be interpreted as meaning only that all torturers are "brothers" to all witches; but if that's what she means, her answer is rather unhelpful.

Wolfe is kind enough to preserve some ambiguity here. The obvious reading is that their guilds are brother and sister guilds. You may read it otherwise if you choose, but don't think Wolfe is going to open his kimono on this issue at this late date. He's fluttering his fan at you here.

One of the things about _Engine Summer_ (referenced later in the Digest) that makes it a minor masterpiece (a Faberge egg, perhaps?) is that we will never and can never know what happened to Rush That Speaks after the story ends. This is, of course, true of every stand-alone novel or story, and Crowley builds that into Rush's tale in a way that is truly poignant, since Rush is both the teller and the subject of the tale. The horror of Asimov's Syndrome is that it means we ultimately find out about the rest of Rush's life, or Severian's, or Hari Seldon's, in a way that tends to trivialize our previous experience of the characters and the milieu.

Huh? The scene with Silk and Remora is the only scene that follows the wedding attack, except for the three-page Afterword.

Well, maybe I should have said is "once the wedding attack theme is introduced," which happens somewhat earlier. My memory of exactly where all these events happen is a little foggy, but frankly, the whole Dorp sequence through to the ending didn't do much for me. The climaxes happen offstage and are too like the climaxes of the previous volumes (yawn, Silk overthrows another bad government; oops, he does it again; yawn, Silk defeats his enemies by a clever trick; etc.) The "dutch" sentence structure was a bit much, too. I found it far more off-putting than the pseudo-Scots that Pig speaks.

I don't want to be too negative. This was a series that I enjoyed and have and will again reread. It could certainly have been outstandingly worse. At least Severian didn't turn out to be the Outsider, or (pace Mr. Borski) Silk an inhumu, or Green St. Anne, or any of the other horrors that have been proposed on this list.

Dave Lebling
aka vizcacha

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

matthew.malthouse — 18 Apr 2001, 13:25 · follows David Lebling

On 12/04/2001 19:10:05 David Lebling wrote:

From: Adam Stephanides <adamsteph at earthlink.net>

[Re: Merryn] But we did, I think. Jahlee says she doesn't know who the boy [Severian]

is, and Merryn says "'He's my brother. We're brothers and sisters, we witches and the torturers.'" (267) There's a bit of ambiguity here, as her

words could be interpreted as meaning only that all torturers are "brothers"

to all witches; but if that's what she means, her answer is rather unhelpful.

Wolfe is kind enough to preserve some ambiguity here. The obvious reading is that their guilds are brother and sister guilds. You may read it otherwise if you choose, but don't think Wolfe is going to open his kimono on this issue at this late date. He's fluttering his fan at you here.

Another 'I can't quite remember' I'm afraid but is it not said early on that the boy children of condemned prisoners who could stand under a certain bar were taken into the torturers guild and the girl children given to the witches? The ambiguity remains but with the possibility that Merryn and Sev could be biological brother and sister although if so they should not be aware of it.

Matthew - catching up, being 1/2 way through RttW

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