

several things

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 20 Jan 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/34>

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Fernando Q. Gouvea — 20 Jan 1997, 10:20

Hello, all.

I just had a fun time reading the list archives. Lots of interesting things there! Some comments:

1) Quetzal -

He seems less ambiguous to me than to most of the people who wrote. My tendency was to see him as a kind of "fellow-traveler": at the moment, his goals match Silk's, he wants to get people to get off the Whorl. It seems clear to me that he is the one who attacked Teasel, and he certainly did suck the blood of the little boy who was bitten by a snake (presumably that helped the boy?). He is not completely evil (who is?), and he does seem to develop some affection for some of the people around him, but his goal all along seems to be to get people to Green.

As to where he came from, someone said there were indications he was on the ship from the beginning. If so, I missed them; what are they? My assumptions were (a) that the Whorl has been in the Blue/Green system for quite a while, and (b) that somehow Quetzal got on board (doesn't the postscript suggest the inhumi can move from Green to Blue?).

Is he a shape changer? I had the impression that it was more that he had some kind of power to cloud people's minds, so that they saw (or did not see) what Quetzal wanted them to see. I see his explanation (involving the black robe) as disingenuous. This fits Mucor's "the man who isn't there" description.

2) The gammadion-

This one caught me by surprise; it never occurred to me to look it up. The possibility that it is a swastika is quite intriguing. Can someone offer up a picture of what a "voided Greek cross" looks like? (By the way, some people seemed to assume a cross-shaped-void, but a "voided cross" has to be a cross that somehow was voided, no?)

3) Horn-

I haven't yet reread the set with the idea of looking for evidence of Horn as narrator... But one thing that occurred to me was the following. As I read the early books, I noticed that Silk is somewhat opaque. One doesn't always know what he is thinking or feeling. In contrast to Severian, who clearly knows more than he tells, I got the feeling that I understood certain things better than the narrator. This makes sense if Horn is narrator, since Silk seems to have remained somewhat opaque to him.

Remember, also, that Horn is very good at imitating Silk's voice and ways of speaking.

Another remark is that there's some analogy to the gospel of John here, since Horn seems to

conclude his book as an old man. Is he giving us Silk as he sees him after many years of thinking about what the man was like?

4) The scene at the Talus factory-

Well, besides serving the purposes that have already been pointed out, this scene allows Wolfe to show off his engineering background a bit, partly as a response to all the critics who insist in classifying his books as fantasy. But I agree that some extra thought should go into what the scene is for. It is certainly one more illustration of the idea that all the hustle and bustle in which various governments and factions are engaged is ultimately pointless, but it's too extended to be only that. Perhaps another point is that the scene gives us a pretty good measure of the level of technology present in the Whorl.

5) Some other remarks-

In the first three books, moments from the life of Christ are mentioned (either they were part of Silk's illumination by the Outsider or Silk knew about them from the writings): the cleansing of the temple in the first book, the triumphal entry in the second, the crucifixion in the third. Is there one in the fourth book?

Given that Wolfe has established a connection with the Book of the New Sun by having Typhon be the creator of the Whorl, are there other links? Jonas, in the BotNS, is a chem, no? And the inhumi fit into the large set of alien menaces roaming Urth, though I don't recall a direct mention of them.

What is one to make of the appearance of Patera Pike's ghost?

I wouldn't put too much weight on the analogy between the Blue/Green system and the one in the Fifth Head of Cerberus. Wolfe often uses similar ideas and themes. There are several green men, for example, in several books, the goddess in There Are Doors appears in the Soldier books too, and there are real similarities between the house of the narrator in Fifth Head and the House Absolute in BotNS.

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Renning's Maxim:
Man is the highest animal. Man does the classifying.

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