

(Blue) Spoilers Abounding

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 24 Sep 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/634>

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Alex David Groce — 24 Sep 1999, 12:38

Well, I'm on page 170, having just finished the Chapter "Seawrack" before going to bed and have some random comments:

(1) I'm glad to see Wolfe returning to first-person narrative. I love LONG SUN, but I think Wolfe's strongest writing is almost always when he's giving us a narrator's view (PEACE, first part of 5HC, BOTNS, "Seven American Nights") of things. It's interesting to note that once again, Wolfe has us reading not a story, crafted by Gene Wolfe, but an artifact--"Horn's Book," edited by Hoof and Hide (and presumably their wives). Wolfe shares this habit with Nabokov--he loves to explain how the work you're reading came about, even to include in the narrative the (fictional) circumstances under which it was written--BOTNS, BOTLS (as a massive surprise at the end), "Seven American Nights", the soldier books, PEACE, Urth (which gives us a good explanation for how Severian's first narrative ended up in Wolfe's back yard), and so on. The number one question I have right now is, "Who IS the narrator?" He says his name is Horn, and in some sense this is clearly true. On the other hand, he says that Horn is dead, and refers to Horn a few jarring times in the third person. Something strange is going on here, but I haven't yet a clue what exactly it is--also, people seem to think he's Silk, but that is easier to explain. This whole Rajan business is also reasonable, after all, Wolfe's BOOK OF THE X SUN protagonists have a curious habit of becoming the proper rulers of their states.

(2) At first I thought that Seawrack's mother was an undine from BOTNS. Now that it appears she can change shape this seems less likely, but it leads to an interesting (if almost certainly wrong) hypothesis. What if the Whorl is the Urth of the New Sun? This would explain Wolfe's suggestion that Severian may show up in these books. Green, then, would be Luna with it's orbit altered significantly. I'm trying to piece together from the geographical descriptions a map of the continents, but as the geography of Urth may have changed drastically after the New Sun, I'm not sure this will help. This is almost certainly wrong--I don't see where the inhumis would come from (unless they were always on Luna and now are free to "fly across" thanks to the orbit change), and three-hundred years seems far too short a time between the end of Typhon's age and the coming of the New Sun. Of course, Seawrack's Mom could be an undine, but not on Urth--they are said to fly the stars, after all. Perhaps "Mother" is something more like Erebus or Abaia, able to take the shapes of what the monsters on Urth take as brides.

(3) Seawrack is another one of Wolfe's portraits of Love, the Goddess, woman, whatever.

(4) This book has a very Vancean feel--even more so than most of Wolfe's work. I'm not sure where it comes from, other than that Horn's quest seems more picaresque than Severian's (Severian's move from gate to gate and back again is, even before you know where it is going, a very determined seeming thing-- he has some presentiment of where it's going from the beginning)--and Silk didn't really cover all that much geographical territory. Perhaps it's the sailing (as usual, Wolfe shows a striking interest in the details of sailing-- a very "Incarnational" interest in the hard edges of how things are done that is also present in his interest (evidenced a lot so far in BLUE) in how to make things--paper, crops, a business).

"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.