

# Digest whorl.v010.n104

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 13 Apr 2000

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David Langford — 13 Apr 2000, 20:42

Adam Stephanides <adamsteph at earthlink.net> exfoliated:

1) On p. 126 Horn refers to the burials alive of inhumati practiced in Gaon as "inhumations." I don't know whether this is an actual word meaning "burials alive" or a coinage by Wolfe on analogy with "exhumation." Either way it's a pun, if a grim one.

Inhumations, and the transitive verb "to inhume", are part of the professional jargon of Terry Pratchett's Discworld guild of assassins. Hey, maybe Gene Wolfe's a Pratchett fan! Certainly John Clute has suggested that Pratchett is a Wolfe fan, on the basis of parallels between =Small Gods= and =The Book of the New Sun=....

Dave

David Langford

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

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Sheila Herndon — 14 Apr 2000, 09:16 · follows David Langford

--- whorl-errors at lists.best.com wrote:  
Severian's \*Book of Gold\*, to a \*Book of Silk\*,  
and  
now a \*Book of Horn\*. Likewise, our protagonists

Oh, a new tangential thought on materials- true dreams come through the gates of ivory, and false dreams comes through the gates of horn - someone correct this if I am wrong, as I do not know the source of this folklore and have only read from secondary sources, a Seamus Heaney poem, and a comic book.

so anyway, wonder if Wolfe meant to allude to the Gates of Horn when naming Horn (if it is the case that the allusion is to some old folklore).

sh

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Alex David Groce — 14 Apr 2000, 12:47 · follows Sheila Herndon

Hmmm... This is definitely a possible source of Horn's name, except that the symbolism is the reverse of (ivory true, horn false). To wit (from Fitzgerald's Aeneid translation):

"There are two gates of Sleep, one said to be  
Of horn, whereby the true shades pass with ease,  
The other all white ivory agleam  
Without a flaw, and yet false dreams are sent  
By this one through the ghosts of the upper world."

So if this is intentional, it's an allusional argument for Horn's veracity as a narrator. Or, at least, for his veracity in the sense of prophecy and access to the underlying truth of events (which is usually what is assigned to dream-truth).

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

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Timothy Reilly — 16 Apr 2000, 05:47 · follows Alex David Groce

Adam Stephanides wrote:

There is very little humor in OBW (a trait it shares with most of Wolfe's books), but a while ago Kieran Cleary posted one humorous bit. Here are two more

<snip>

I always thought Horn's speculations on how the inhum get from Green to Blue (and to the Whorl) at pp 180-183 was intended humorously (not by Horn, but by the reader seeing he's thinking himself into knots). Certainly it's hard to take some of the logic seriously, and it includes the elementary error "[l]ight objects fall much more slowly than heavy ones" at p 181. But now I'm less sure - since this is not talking about a vacuum (the context is dealing with re-entry heat) maybe it makes sense. And Horn's conjecture that the inhum simply hold their breath in travelling the (still very lengthy) distance between Green and Blue at conjunction is supported by their survival when buried.

As for Wolfe's humor in other books, I actually thought there was too much humour in TUNS, one of the reasons I'm ambivalent about it. It seems to me to detract from the grandeur of the preceding volumes to have Valeria cracking puns about waves of gravity/dignity before she died and Tzadkiel (right name? off the top of my head) fluttering about like Tinkerbelle at the Brooke Madregot. And the Patera Incus character for one just seems to have been put in TBLS largely for light relief; the same might be said to a lesser extent of Master Xiphias, Oreb and Tick. (Again I didn't like this, but then I didn't like lots of things about TBLS). I personally don't think Wolfe's attempts at humour in general are very successful - puns seem to be the order of the day!

On another subject, I notice on rereading OBW that Horn's first experience of enhanced perception seems to occur shortly after he gets out of the pit: from "that time forward" he sees things "as a good painter must" (p 228). Soon after - apologising to Seawrack after raping her - "[f]or an instant (only an instant) I had heard Silk's voice issuing from my own mouth. I tried to prolong it but could not" (p 247). So seems likely, as has already been suggested, that he has had some sort of download from Silk (or "Pasilk"?) while in the pit - probably thereby resurrected as he does appear to have died.

Tim

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