

Impressions, riddles, etc.

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 31 Jul 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/889>

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Alice Turner — 31 Jul 2000, 22:46

From: "Ian Smith" <iancsmith at 4unet.co.uk>

Hi Ian, and welcome,

No-one seems to have queried yet the reason for the sudden change in Horn between the first two volumes. At the end of OBW we leave Horn still wallowing to some extent in self-loathing, still questioning whether he should be writing his book. At the start of IGJ this has disappeared, and throughout he confines himself to minor self-deprecatory remarks (very much in the manner of Silk...). As the time lapse between the end of writing the end of OBW and the start of OGJ is purportedly very short (I think there are hints that it is only around 2 days?) what has caused this transformation? Could it have something to do with the mysterious encounter in the woods before Horn meets brother and sister?

No, I think it is, as has been discussed quite recently, Horn's transfer to Silk's body, with Silk's powerful gene-spliced leadership DNA having an effect on those he encounters. I'm not quite sure from your post that you have finished IGJ--this will become clearer.

"I found him in the forest, sitting in the dark under the trees. I could not see him, it was too dark to see anything. But I knelt beside him, and lay my head upon his knee, and he comforted me."(OBW p.378)

At first I thought this was another neighbor encounter, but in IGJ Horn says he hasn't encountered them since they moved him to a new body. It could also be a particularly obtuse dream sequence, I suppose. Any ideas?

It is Babbie speaking here. It is probably Horn's fever-dream, but maybe not. Babbie is going to turn up again in the third volume (thank goodness, I missed him) and we'll know more.

Hi Wombat,

At 12:04 PM 7/29/00 -0400, vizcacha wrote:

Second, and more importantly (and here we are getting close to the true secret), there are actually no inhum. There is only, poignantly, "a

girl
trapped in the body of a blood-drinking reptile." The inhumans only
have
"spirits" because their victims have spirits, only have intelligence
because
their victims have intelligence, and so on.

I don't think this point has been made here: The inhumans seem
specifically
to be telepathic reptiles that developed their telepathy to enhance
their
predation. It seems likely that the assumption of human
characteristics is
a side-effect of this telepathic ability. I can't tell if they are
capable
of true shape-shifting; their ability to pose as humans is certainly
enhanced by, and may be completely, telepathic projection. Note that
this
does **not** seem to be part of what Krait told Horn on Green, since
Horn
doesn't realize this until he sees the camouflaged hunters in Goan.

They are shapeshifters only to a degree and I don't think it's fully "telepathic." Remember three things: They cannot change their density; a careful upclose look, especially at their limbs and hair by someone who knows what to look for, will give them away; they are cold-blooded and cannot fake otherwise. Horn has been given the ability to know them almost at once, but Fava and Jahlee are very careful not to get too close to any human. This is somewhat important to the plot.

It seems that Incanto's travel between worlds is a combination of the
inhuman telepathic projection and the Vanished People's indeterminate
reality.

Again, I discount "telepathy," except on an elementary level--"charisma" might be more like it. This is a gift from the Vanished People, I think, and meant, in some mysterious manner, to bring humans and inhumans together, since neither can do it alone. (Though I guess the VP can.)

Jahlee describes the
pursuit of Horn at the end of OBW, and how the inhumans all felt they
should
kill him, but each hoped that another would do it first. They feel
this way
out of gratitude and also, I think, because the people whose blood
they have
absorbed would not be quick to kill either. Few are eager to cast the
first
stone, sinful or not. Result, Horn escapes.

Well, also, the inhumans are strongly biologically conditioned not to
kill
their prey. In "nature", they will feed on a victim repeatedly over
the
course of years rather than kill. If the inhumans surrounding the Rajan
at
the end of *_Blue_* have not fed from killers, they will not have
"learned"
how to kill, themselves.

No, you really can't say that. Horn had to clean the sewers, with thousands of people dead from inhuman greed. Unless that was a dream, and I don't think it was.

I'd go a step further: If all the inhumans are treated as human by all humans, they will *become* human. But I think there's one more twist to the secret coming, and I don't know what it is. So far, Wolfe has overdelivered on every promise of the narrative; I'd like to think he's capable of overdelivering on the promise of the secret of the inhumans as well.

I don't quite follow. But your second sentence has been brought up over and over on the list, and I still think it is too simplistic. So sue me.

Asked Raymond:

I have a quick question. Why did Silk agree to become a part of Pas?

Is

there an explanation in the Long Sun books? Just wondering.

We have absolutely, positively no proof that he did. This was only a conjecture of the pre Horn/Pas Horn that it MIGHT have happened.

Welcome, Muskrat, and don't be scared of Nutria--his fangs are mostly for show:

I have to wonder whether you all are making life more difficult for him. Does he read these archives?

No.

-alga

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

Kevin J. Maroney — 01 Aug 2000, 11:49 · follows Alice Turner

At 10:46 PM 7/31/00 -0400, Alga wrote:

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Casting back, I seem to remember something in Blue about the inhumans changing shape to travel between the worlds. So they probably do *really* shapeshift mildly. But I think the projective telepathy is real; Incanto's discussion of watching an inhuman die indicates that there's something more than just physical shapeshifting going on.

That said, the projective telepathy is far from perfect; that's obvious. They emulate their prey, but not well enough to fool someone who knows what to look for.

No, you really can't say that. Horn had to clean the sewers, with thousands of people dead from inhuman greed. Unless that was a dream, and I don't think it was.

I don't think it was a dream, either. But I think that the inhumans of the City killed lots of humans not deliberately but out of exhaustion--they reflect the cruelty visited on them by the Vanished People and work (and drain) their humans to death, but do not necessarily set out to murder them.

I'd go a step further: If all the inhumans are treated as human by all humans, they will *become* human. But I think there's one more twist to the secret coming, and I don't know what it is. So far, Wolfe has

overdelivered on every promise of the narrative; I'd like to think he's capable of overdelivering on the promise of the secret of the inhumans as well.

I don't quite follow.

I think that throughout the narrative of *_Long Sun_* and *_Short Sun_*, Wolfe has set up narrative expectations. He then, pretty consistently, has fulfilled those expectations in ways that, I feel, surpassed expectations.

Wolfe has spent a tremendous amount of narrative energy building up the "secret of the inhumans". I have a hard time believing the secret is anything we could guess. Hence, I think that the secret encompasses the idea that humans can rid themselves of the threat of the inhumans by acts of loving kindness, but I have faith that it involves something much bigger.

But your second sentence has been brought up over and over on the list, and I still think it is too simplistic. So sue me.

You'll be hearing from my lawyer.

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