

# Scylla as Mother

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 01 Aug 2000

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Robert Borski — 01 Aug 2000, 14:36

Safely on the ground again, but backpedaling from an earlier position, I'd like to now toss out the following notion: is it possible that the entity Horn and Seawrack call the Mother is actually Typhon's daughter Scylla? For starters Wolfe gives her additional gloss in his Proper Names in the Text, reminding us that Scylla, in addition to being a frequent haunter of Incanto's dreams, is "a sea-monster of the Red Sun Whorl"; why provide this information if it's not to have some future bearing? Secondly, in the first of Incanto's dreams, Scylla is pictured *\*in red\** (IGJ, 59). Compare this to the Mother's first appearance in OBW, 153: "The top of the speaker's head broke the water, and she rose effortlessly until the oily swell reached no higher than her waist. Like the face of Kypris seen in the glass of General Saba's airship it remains vivid today, the streaming form of a cowed woman robed *\*in pulsing red,\** a woman three times my own stature at least, with the setting sun behind her." Horn subsequently sees what may be the Mother descending into an underwater ship, and Seawrack, when asked earlier by Horn about the boat she's come from, has responded, "Down there." Plus there are numerous times in OBW where Horn compares the Mother directly to Scylla: e.g., "Soon I was to gaze upon the sea goddess of the Vanished People.

*\*Perhaps she was Scylla in another form,\** as Silk once confided to me that Kypris was becoming another form of the Outsider." (156) Also: "Having the sea, as we in Old Viron did not, the Neighbors had also a goddess of the sea. She may have been their water goddess as well, as Scylla is at home; I cannot say." (157)

This lends itself to a number of intriguing possibilities, of course. Perhaps Scylla, like the Whorl's Cargo, has made it to Blue, where in a specially-designed-and-decanted body, she's attempting to exert new control over her former worshippers, perhaps even knowing about the coming merger of Passilk/Horn. Perhaps as well her pre-Whorl counterpart back on Urth has played a part in the nuturing of Seawrack, whose "real" mother, we've been told, has drowned--could this have been during the tidal havoc wrought by the coming of the New Sun? (Getting Seawrack to Blue may be no problem if the Neighbors possess--as they seem to do--mirror-transport technology.) Doubtless, in RTTW, we'll find out more, but for the moment I'd like to suggest this as an alternative to Horn's she-must-be-the-sea-goddess-of-the-Vanished-People supposition.

Robert Borski

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