

Inhumi Secret

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 09 Aug 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/919>

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Jim Jordan — 09 Aug 2000, 20:06

I submit for your consideration that the secret is that men must die for the inhumi. They must learn to die for each other, but in this narrative, also to die for the inhumi. It's not just the golden rule, but being willing to lay down your life for your enemies, as Jesus did.

I submit that the eucharist the Outsider leads Horn to perform indicates that this will turn out to be the answer. That's the meaning of the eucharist, for by eating the death of Jesus into ourselves, we become able to die for our enemies as He died for His.

That's why the secret is so hard. Humans will find this the hardest thing of all to do. It's harder than loving each other, because it's easy to love the lovable. Or, it's the toughest kind of love. When humans become willing to die for their enemies, and inhumi acquire this characteristic from them, the inhumi will be willing to die rather than destroy humans. This will "destroy" the inhumi, though I suspect it will not annihilate them but transform them somehow.

I bet that Horn gives his life for Jahlee before it's all over.

I also bet that when it's all over, the Memoirs of Severian, the Book of Silk, and the Book of Horn will be seen as a progression. Severian never really learns much about love, and certainly never dies for anyone. He does grow and mature, but not as much as Silk. Silk makes much more progress, but Horn will make the most. The triptich of their lives will make one thematic narrative of personal growth and maturation into Christlikeness.

I cannot help but think of the Casher O'Neill stories of Cordwainer Smith, though I don't know if these influenced Wolfe at all. They deal with politics, spirituality, and religion progressively, as "On the Gem Planet" is a "mirror for princes"; "On the Wind Planet" is about conversion; and "On the Sand Planet" is about the application of that conversion back into the world. In a very broad way, Wolfe's three narratives follow the same kinds of themes: in the real world, apart from the real world (on the whorl), and back into the real world. Just a thought.

But I'll bet I'm right about the secret.

Patera Nutria

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

Adam Stephanides — 09 Aug 2000, 23:11 · follows Jim Jordan

Jim Jordan wrote:

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[snip]

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I don't think that this is the secret, for a couple of reasons. For one thing, it doesn't fit several of the things we know about the secret: it doesn't explain why the inhumans drink human blood, it doesn't have anything to do with Krait's mother drinking from Sinew, and it doesn't explain the Neighbor's remark on p. 21.

For another thing, iirc (I don't have the book with me) in OBW Horn says explicitly that if humans could use the secret it would turn the inhumans back into the unintelligent predators they originally were. So if humans did come to "love the inhumans," they would presumably refuse to apply the secret (since the inhumans have no wish to lose their intelligence).

--Adam

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William Ansley — 09 Aug 2000, 22:31 · follows Adam Stephanides

At 8:06 PM -0500 8/9/00, Jim Jordan wrote:

I submit for your consideration that the secret is that men
must die for
the inhumans.

Nutria,

You know, I really like this idea. It seems somehow very right. The only problem with it is that I really find it hard to see how Horn could have used it as a credible threat against the inhumans. They seem to have a pretty realistic idea of what humans are capable of, so I don't know why they would be at all worried about Horn telling this fact to anyone else. And why would anyone else believe it?

Frankly, after reading IGJ, I no longer believe that Wolfe has any intention of directly revealing the secret of the inhumans in the last book, so we will probably be able to keep up this guessing game indefinitely.

William Ansley

William Ansley

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Jim Jordan — 10 Aug 2000, 09:45 · follows William Ansley

At 10:31 PM 8/9/2000 -0400, you wrote:

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Yeah, you're probably right on both counts. That's what happens when you stay up too late and get inspired to write a post.

I'm still inclined to think what I wrote may turn out to be a theme in the book, but perhaps not the secret. If the secret is something that Horn could pull out of the hat and apply instantly any time he wants, then it is not something that humans have to mature into, but a technique of some sort.

And I agree that we're not going to be TOLD the secret.

Nutria

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