

Clute's revelation

The Whorl list — 5 messages, 5 voices, 16 Aug 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/939>

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David Lomax — 16 Aug 2000, 01:19

vermouliau at yahoo.com wrote

SF WEEKLY has just published John Clute's review of IN GREEN'S JUNGLES, and (among other remarks of interest) Clute declares that it is "reasonably clear" that Horn/Silk is himself an inhumu. Any reactions?

Argh! Clute beat me to it -- maybe others did too. I've been deliberately not reading the list until I could get and read IGJ. Just finished today. On the weekend, while we were on a long car trip, my girlfriend offered to read a couple of chapters to me. Around the middle of the novel. While she was reading, I suddenly burst out, "oh, my god!" When she got over her shock at thinking we were about to get into an accident, she asked what I was talking about. "What if Silk is actually an inhumu?" I said.

She doesn't read Wolfe and had no idea what was going on in the novel. But she agreed that it might be a possibility.

As I read on, I became more and more convinced. I could be unconvinced by some dazzling logic, but it sure seems to me that our humble narrator may not be completely human. There are some counter-arguments: Oreb still likes him, for one thing. But what about that bit near the end when Horn/Silk talks ruefully about his appetite being too great?

So there I was thinking, hey, maybe nobody else has talked about this. Maybe I can make an original contribution to the list instead of just lurking all my life. And what happens, but Clute beats me to it. I'll get you for this, Clute, if it's the third-last thing I do.

And the inhumu secret? Could it just be that if humans gave themselves willingly to the inhumu, then the inhumu would be incapable of killing the humans?

And weren't those last few chapters just glorious?

David Lomax

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

Jim Jordan — 16 Aug 2000, 00:52 · follows David Lomax

At 01:19 AM 8/16/2000 -0400, you wrote:

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The appetite stuff is typical of Silk, though. He was always semi-fasting. I'd like to see some positive evidence for this thesis. The last line of the novel might be a clue, but only with a lot more evidence.

Patera Nutria

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Robert Borski — 16 Aug 2000, 02:12 · follows Jim Jordan

SF WEEKLY has just published John Clute's review of IN GREEN'S JUNGLES, and (among other remarks of interest) Clute declares that it is "reasonably clear" that Horn/Silk is himself an inhumu. Any reactions?

David Lomax has already mentioned the Oreb angle, and it seems hard to believe that Incanto-the-inhumu could fool the wise bird whereas Quetzal, the Bean and Jahlee couldn't.

Yet another contraindication is Horn's handwriting. The inhumi have at best terrible writing and Horn/Incanto has handwritten two books, at least the first of which (and no doubt the second and third) has been read by Horn's wife and children with no editorial comment about Horn's rather execrable penmanship. Ditto for Inclito's mother, who receives handwritten instructions on how she can remedy her recent ill turn in health ("Er, what are these words, Incanto? 'Necklace of garlic?'"). And isn't it likely that if Horn were able to manipulate his physical appearance, he'd at least try to appear fully sighted or without the wound in his side? (Not sure how shapeshifting works if you have scars or wounds.) Or that the Neighbors would aid and abet a former vampiric nemesis?

And lastly while there is a precedent in Wolefean fiction--Victor Trenchard killing and taking the place of John Marsch in FIFTH HEAD--at least it is identifiable when it happens, something I'm not sure Clute's hornjacking is. (Who exactly is subsuming Horn's personality? Krait? Some other inhumu? And when/where does it occur?)

In other words list me among the unconvinced (as I am about Silk's suicide, since Catholics that die by their own hand are forbidden not only burial in Catholic cemeteries, but Heaven), although I do admit I'm willing to consider further evidence.

Robert Borski

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Kevin J. Maroney — 16 Aug 2000, 10:48 · follows Robert Borski

At 02:12 AM 8/16/00 -0500, you wrote:
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<AOL>Me too.</AOL>

It is consummately possible that Clute has noticed something I have missed--in fact, I would bet money that he has, many times, in IGJ alone--but this just feels wrong.

Kevin Maroney kmaroney at ungames.com

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Fernando Q. Gouvea — 16 Aug 2000, 11:00 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

Nah... Even Clute hedges his bets, by saying maybe he's an inhumu (spells it wrong, as "inhuma"... or does he mean that?), maybe he's an aquastor, maybe something else. My main reaction is why should Wolfe repeat his effects? He's already written "Fifth Head" and The Book of the New Sun.

I agree completely with alga that having Horn become a better human being seems to be central to this novel. One might even imagine an Inferno/Purgatorio/Paradiso triptych in Severian/Silk/Horn.

Finally, the evidence is all against it. Horn is shown writing, riding horses, using weapons (even the azoth, at one point), all sorts of stuff that inhumi don't do. Oreb likes him. He eats (not much, but he does). To sustain Clute's idea one would have to assume not only an unreliable narrator, but a positively misleading one.

Fernando

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Security check: INTRUDER ALERT!

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