

Another message from Clute: read it in full!

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 17 Aug 2000

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Nicholas Gevers — 17 Aug 2000, 08:12

Yesterday I relayed the gist of the list's reactions to the "Clute Revelation" to Clute himself (if in so doing I misrepresented anyone's viewpoint, I apologise). Below is what Clute has since written to me, including his remarks on the points the list has raised.

--- John Clute wrote:

Dear Nick,

Interesting responses, which sort of run the gamut of what I think about the notion, or intuition--rather than thought-through hypothesis--that Horn/Silk may be an inhumu; or that, perhaps more cogently, that Gene Wolfe is allowing us to consider the possibility at this stage of the enterprise.

As I'm sure you know, the third volume is due out soon; and as I'm sure you know, Wolfe--unlike his procedure with Long Sun --apparently wrote the whole text before any of it was published: so I do live in the expectation that nothing here is inadvertent, and that everything discovered will, as with New Sun, enrich the whole. Comments follow.

1) One member agrees with you, and is cross you expressed the idea before he could.

---Sorry about that. To make it worse, you might note that I mentioned the inhumu notion very briefly in my earlier review of the first volume, also in SFW.

2) Several others are thoughtful, saying they need time to reflect.

---Me too.

3) A feminist feels you're engaging in the reactionary error of assuming that because someone sympathises with the enemy he must be one of them; in her view, Horn is demonstrating the great human virtue of

interspecies empathy, not betraying an alien identity.

---A bit confused by this, as there are several floating assumptions in here. Unless you were just identifying one of the list as a feminist so I could sort folk out, it doesn't quite seem to me that the issue before us is a feminist issue. But would be glad to get a different take. It may be reactionary to assume that if you're not with us you're with them, but the application of the principle here presupposes the inhumani as enemy, a notion I'm very leary of at this stage. I would go so far as to suggest that Horn/Silk (whoever they are) is more concerned with family than species; and that the book is expanding, as are Horn/Silk's Assumptions of different forms, through an expansion of the idea of family.

4) Most criticism of your hypothesis rests on textual details: if Horn is an inhumu, why doesn't Oreb perceive this? If Horn is an inhumu, how can he write his text with such facility, whereas inhumani in general can hardly write at all? When is the transition from human to inhumu supposed to have occurred? If Horn is capable of shapeshifting, why doesn't he do away with his injuries such as his missing eye? And so it goes.

---All good points, it strikes me (see comment after next paragraph). The question here about when he might have changed is the question I asked: when did he begin to find it difficult to eat human food? Chronology is so complex in the text that I could not begin to give an answer to this on the basis of one reading--or, for that matter, work it out to my satisfaction that this is an irrelevant track to follow.

Basically, the Whorl list has been agreeing for the last nine months that Horn is the (human) redeemer of the humans of the three whorls, and that "the

secret

of the inhumani", which Horn is sworn to protect,
relates somehow to that redemption: if humans
achieve
goodness in themselves, the inhumani preying on them
will imbibe and emulate that goodness.

---I'd be very disappointed if this were the
case: by which I mean
I'd be disappointed if this were the "secret of the
inhumani" which
we have as far as I know not yet been told--because
1) although the idea
seems transparently and conspicuously true 2) WE
ALREADY KNOW IT.

In Green's Jungles (I haven't chapter and verse
here) seems to make it
extremely clear that inhumani take on the
characteristics of those they
change into (as it were) as part of the process of
feeding on them.
The idea that the achievement of human
goodness (which would
similarly transform the inhumani) seems to me, though
very likely to be the
case, not to be an inhumani secret at all.

My intuition about Horn/Silk is inchoate
and absolutely not
defended by me unto death, unlike the way I got
addicted, nearly 20 years
ago now, to the idea that Severian's mother was in
fact the Autarch. (It
took a long time to lose the sweet-tooth of that
particular notion.)

My intuition is based on a sense that
somehow or other Horn/Silk's
nature-as-inhumani (if it is confirmed to be a fair
take) is intrinsic
with his relationship to the Neighbors, or
whoever/whatever represents
them to him, inhumani (those inhumani who took on
Neighborly nature) or ghost
or aquastors in the Corridors of Time or what. And
that Horn/Silk as
inhumani as Neighbor might well "fool" Oreb, etc, etc.

Best,
John