

First impressions

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 24 Aug 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/972>

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Peter Westlake — 24 Aug 2000, 11:56

Wow!

What a good book! There are so many arresting moments, both hinted-at revelations and surprises pulled out of nowhere. Even "little" things like Mora's personal problems are striking. I don't know why - the unexpectedness, or the fact that Horn takes time to help her while there is so much else going on, or just the fact that it's done so well. This is the subject matter of mainstream literature, yet it's hard to imagine any mainstream novel making it so readable or so interesting. And how many other great works of literature have lines about being a girl trapped in the body of a blood-drinking reptile? ... actually, that whole aspect of it is very moving. It reminds me, now that I come to think of it, of what must be about the most spine-chilling thing I've ever read - the alzado in TBOTNS. This is different, though, in being much more hopeful. The inhumis are still living spirits, rather than horrific ghostly echoes, and the tone of the book suggests that they might be redeemed. I can't imagine how, though - aren't they always going to be blood-drinking reptiles?

Bitten by the evidence:

Mr Clute's idea of Horn as inhumu doesn't seem right to me - as well as the evidence adduced against it so far, the scene where Horn makes a big thing of telling Hide about inhumis not eating happens immediately after Horn has actually *shown Hide his own teeth*!

In hindsight:

Horn's description of Silk as the *phantom* who has eluded him through three whorls now seems particularly apt :-)

Babbie:

I'm glad Babbie got home all right, and that Mucor is sending him to Horn again, but how did he do it? I know he can row (a somewhat startling idea itself), but sailing back across the ocean is another matter. Maybe he and Seawrack could do it between them, but why would she leave Pajarocu? We'll probably get a throwaway line about him signing on with Wijzer...

Cruelty to Bears:

It's particularly noticeable how many parts of the story Horn starts to tell us about but doesn't finish. Do we *ever* see him come back from one of his visits to Green, for instance? Or from Urth? At one point Horn mentions that he has written almost nothing about the rest of the adventures on the spirit trip to Green, which is what he was supposed to have been writing about - aaagh! That Wolfe, teasing the poor reader so!

The Secret:

The speculations here about the secret of the inhumi being to do with willing sacrifice are very interesting, but don't address Horn's assertion that it could be used to reduce the inhumi to mindless animals, not better but not worse than crocodiles. And how does that fit in with the general theme that we ought to be *nice* to them?

I did feel very clever to have guessed that Sinew was bitten by Krait's mother. I need all the ego boost I can get, too, after reading the abstracts for the symposium on Saturday. Anyone else from here going to be there?

Spectacled Bear.

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