



In Green's Jungles

Gene Wolfe

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Gene Wolfe's *In Green's Jungles* is the second volume, after *On Blue's Waters*, of his ambitious SF trilogy, *The Book of the Short Sun*. It is again narrated by Horn, who has embarked on a quest from his home on the planet Blue in search of the heroic leader Patera Silk. Now Horn's identity has become ambiguous, a complex question embedded in the story, whose telling is itself complex, shifting from place to place, present to past. Horn recalls visiting the Whorl, the enormous spacecraft in orbit that brought the settlers from Urth, and going thence to the planet Green, home of the blood-drinking alien inhum. There, he led a band of mercenary soldiers, answered to the name of Rajan, and later became the ruler of a city state. He has also encountered the mysterious aliens, the Neighbors, who once inhabited both Blue and Green. He remembers a visit to Nessus, on Urth. At some point, he died. His personality now seemingly inhabits a different body, so that even his sons do not recognize him. And people mistake him for Silk, to whom he now bears a remarkable resemblance. *In Green's Jungles* is Wolfe's major new fiction, *The Book of the Short Sun*, building toward a strange and seductive climax.

In Green's Jungles Details

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Author : Gene Wolfe

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Jordan Halsey says

Gene Wolfe is a genius, and this is my favorite of his books. The one's I've read anyway. The man is a wizard. In this book, the second of a trilogy, with that trilogy a sequel to another series of four books (quadrology?), with links all the way back to the Book of the New Sun... well you would expect that it would be incomprehensible to the uninitiated. And it just occurred to me that I had already read all of the previous books before I read this one, but I still don't believe that you MUST read them to understand what happens in this one. That is the man's genius.

Very simply, a man is attempting to return to his family after a long absence, a long journey, but becomes caught up in the troubles of a town he comes to along the way, where he is offered food and shelter, but which is menaced by a nearby rival.

To reveal more would be to deny you one of the greatest pleasures in reading Gene Wolfe's work: working out for yourself the things he leaves unsaid. The book and indeed, the trilogy, are presented as the journal of the traveler, an account to his wife and children of his journey and the various things that have kept him from them for so long. For whatever reason, things that other authors would state explicitly are only alluded to. For instance, why would a man writing to his family tell them that the planet they live on is not Earth? Presumably, they already know that, since they live there too. So, it is never mentioned, although I don't feel bad saying this as it is very quickly apparent that this planet cannot be Earth. They call it Blue and they know nothing of Earth.

While you can read this book without reading the others, I don't recommend it. You simply miss out on so much. Start with the Long Sun novels. They were reprinted in two volumes as Litany of the Long Sun and Epiphany of the Long Sun. Before I read In Green's Jungle's, they were my favorite Gene Wolfe books. Then read On Blue's Waters which recounts the first part of Horn's journey. And of course, there is a concluding book set both before and after this one. I told you Gene Wolfe was a wizard.

Mark says

If *In Green's Jungles* were a nonfiction work, its author, Horn, would be ripped apart by the resident critic of whatever the planet Blue's equivalent of the New York Review of Books is--not just for his inability to tell a straight story, but also for his inability to decide whether he's writing a diary or a memoir. Moreso than the one before it, this book is all over the place, temporally and geographically. The story, as told by Horn, fluctuates between what he's doing now (the "diary" sections) and what he did a while back (the "memoir" sections), with no apparent rhyme or reason, save the order in which Horn happens to set them down on paper.

But of course *In Green's Jungles* is *not* nonfiction, so it's a fascinating puzzle rather than a hair-rending nightmare of a reading experience. As with every Gene Wolfe novel I've read before, this one raises plenty of questions in the reader's mind without always providing clear, easy answers, but the greatest mystery to me personally is why I enjoyed this book and not its predecessor, *On Blue's Waters*. It's true that Horn is (or, this being a Wolfe novel, should I say "presents himself as"?) less of a bastard in this book than he was (did) in the last one, but Horn's personality and actions alone weren't what disappointed me about *Blue*.

I think it might have something to do with the settings explored in *Green*, which were more varied and

interesting than those in *Blue*. In *Green*, Horn spends some time in the town of Blanko, getting to know Inclito and members of his household. There, while telling stories, Horn (and the inhumana Fava) tell us a little about the planet Green, home of the inhumani. Then Horn leads the citizens of Blanko into battle against the seemingly superior horde of Soldo. Before this sequence is over, Horn and Fava somehow transport themselves and several soldiers astrally onto Green, only to return to Blue as if from a dream. Afterwards, Horn finds a primeval sacrificial stone that presumably belonged to the Vanished People and performs the first Eucharist in who knows how many millennia. Then Horn and Jahlee, another inhumana, transport themselves (again, presumably astrally, and in this case presumably far back in time) as well as some others to Nessus, Severian's old stomping grounds on Urth. Last but not least, Horn, his son Hide, and Jahlee travel to Green to see Horn's other son Sinew, who was trapped on Green during Horn's *physical* trip to that planet earlier in the book. They don't actually see Sinew, but they do find Silk's old friends Auk and Chenille, who had been on one of the landers from the Long Sun meant to colonize Green, became slaves of the inhumani, and were now captives of Sinew. The book ends with Horn, Hide, and Jahlee traveling, on Blue, to an uncertain destination. Horn had mentioned earlier his desire to return to his wife on the island known as Lizard, but seven pages from the end of this book he admits--to his companions, to his readers, and to himself--that if he could be anywhere he would choose to be with Seawrack on their boat. So who knows where the hell he's headed.

In short, it's a book in which a lot happens; some of it confusing, but nearly all of it interesting in some way. In contrast, I did not find much of interest in *Blue*, and this is what made me dislike it even more than this awful man who acted as my narrator and guide. I wonder, though, if the Horn who narrated *Blue* is the same man who narrates *Green*. The *Green* Horn is the same man insofar as he has memories and feelings relating to the events in *Blue*. In other words, there is a continuity between these narrators. So he may be the same person--but is he the same *fundamentally*, or the same *superficially*? I'm not sure. I'd argue the latter, if only because I hated the Horn of *Blue* and appreciated the Horn of *Green*. My appreciation might stem from the implication that the Horn of *Green* is channeling, or even embodying, Silk somehow. Oreb calls him Silk, though Horn dismisses this as a symptom of the bird's limited vocabulary. His own son, Hide, didn't recognize him when they reunited outside Blanko. According to Hide, his father did not have as much hair as Horn does (and this may be a sci-fi novel, but even Gene Wolfe hasn't found a believable way to reverse male pattern baldness). Others, including some inhumani, also address Horn as Silk or Cald . He protests, but not too much.

The sequence that really hit home for me, however, came near the end. To explain how it affected me, I must first discuss the middle of the book, which concerns the battle between the towns of Blanko and Soldo. As I was reading this section of the book, I was enjoying it well enough but kept thinking about how often Gene Wolfe's novels are about war (or, at least, all the books of his that I've read seem to be about war). I began to wonder if he wrote about war so much because he enjoyed it, or because he felt compelled to for some larger reason. In the three Sun series (New Sun, Long Sun, and Short Sun), Wolfe has invented a handful of amazing, alien, unique worlds, and yet war is a nearly constant factor in all of them. Knowing that I was reading the work of a thoughtful author, I had to believe there was a reason.

And then he provided that reason at the end of *Green*: Horn, Hide, and Jahlee have a conversation about the relationships among the humans and inhumani in the Short Sun star system. Horn's belief, which Hide echoes, is that the humans will ultimately triumph over the inhumani if only for mathematical reasons: because when the humans kill inhumani they only benefit, whereas when the inhumani kill humans they also harm themselves because humans are their foodsource. But Jahlee disagrees. Humans fight among each other more than they fight against the inhumani. They betray each other to the inhumani constantly. Humans are cruel and violent, she says, and the more of them there are, the crueler and the more violent they become. Jahlee reminds Hide that he had asked Horn why the humans of a particular settlement had bothered to construct a wall around their town since the inhumani can fly. Her implied answer is that inhumani aren't the only ones that humans need to keep out of their settlements. I am reminded of Ripley's equivalent line in *Aliens*: "You know, Burke, I don't know which species is worse. You don't see them f***ing each other over for a goddamn percentage."

I honestly don't know where this series, as a whole, is headed. Our narrator seems content to ramble aimlessly around as many whorls as Gene Wolfe will let him. But I enjoyed *Green* enough that I'm plunging right into the third and final book, *Return to the Whorl*, without taking a breath. Let's see where we end up!

Andrew Couzens says

In *Green's Jungles* feels like a return, or perhaps more of a reinforcement, of the best elements of the Sun Saga. In it, Wolfe develops a series of layered puzzles, but whereas some of his books were beginning to feel impenetrable for the sake of it, in this novel the puzzles make narrative sense and are in some ways necessary. The book also begins to tie to world of the Long Sun Whorl back to Nessus in the *Book of the New Sun*, which gives me hope that Wolfe will tie things up successfully in the final book.

Don says

I spent the better part of yesterday enjoying the sun and this book, while at the same time celebrating the easter holiday. I found this book, especially the first 3/4 frustrating. I wanted to get more details about *Green* and couldn't figure out why we were spending so much time in yet another city on *Blue* in yet another war. But, he's totally got me hooked, and I'm going to get in a chapter of the last book in this series before I go to work.

Yve says

Every single word of the Short Sun books is phenomenal! I was in the second-to-last chapter when my dad noted, "You're past the climax of your book," which made me realize that these (and *New Sun* and even *Long Sun*) don't really have a climax as such but keep building up and getting twistier and stranger and better until the last page. And that I'm already looking forward to reading it again. I recently read an old interview with Gene Wolfe where he talked about *Silk* as the ultimate good guy:

"We were talking about war in my most recent panel, how easy it is and how dramatic it is. The same thing can be said about evil. A lot of people have the notion that evil is interesting and basically fun, and that good is dull and no fun, and I don't think that's true. If anything, the reverse is true, and I wanted to have a shot at proving that I was right."

And I love it because even so *Silk* (and especially in the Short Sun with the added complication of *Horn*) is not perfect and that somehow makes him even more compelling to read about.

In that same interview, they bring up two of my other favorite aspects of the series - the huge cultural differences throughout the whorls and the careful speech patterning (which also stands out in many of his other novels). In regards to the first and this book, I enjoyed the switch from Gaon to the Italianesque colonies of Grandecitta and especially *Duko Rigoglio*; as well as the fixation with words and naming and etymologies. And for the second, *Horn/Silk* echoes *Severian/Thecla* (and two-headed *Pas*) but here rather than the big differences in memory that signal the divide between *Severian* and *Thecla* there is a distinctly *Silk* attitude and speech pattern that pops up and a few verbal tendencies. I think in a lot of books I take for

granted that the narrator's or principal character's voice echoes the authors but these books are more carefully constructed.

Anyway it was completely worth 9 volumes previous to get to On Blue's Waters and In Green's Jungles! Though the fact that they are technically a separate series is now constantly tempting me to recommend them to innocent bystanders as standalone novels just to gauge how confusing they would be. If you've read this far, why don't you make the Short Sun your first Sun? I promise you will love it.

Ted says

Why has it taken me so many years to make my way through the Short Sun books? Gene Wolfe is my favorite writer, and I've read Book of the New Sun several times, and Book of the Long Sun at least three. The first time I picked up On Blue's Waters I realized how many layers Wolfe was setting up in the story, and .. I didn't want to play. It sounded like work. I left it on the shelf for a year or two. Finally I tried again, gritted my teeth at the feeling of work-for-story, got past it and fell in love with the Short Sun setting.

That doesn't explain the long gap between Blue and Green, caused by other RL factors. I finally re-read Blue earlier this year, and yet still felt sluggish about starting on this book. Imagine my surprise to find it so very different from the preceding volume, each differently magical and intriguing.

I would like to promise that I'll get on the third book soon, but my track record is pretty lousy.

John Lawson says

The story of Patera Horn continues, purportedly covering his experiences on the world of Green. Reality is that precious little of the book actually occurs on Green. Much of which that does is conveyed as parable and second-hand story telling. The bulk of the book deals with Horn on Blue and his quest for Patera Silk. The deeper relationship between Horn and Silk is expanded upon, as well as the role the inhumani play in these worlds. Implied vampire sex ensues.

In true Gene Wolfe fashion, this book is written across multiple timelines, often with confusing and/or unclear breaks, and with a very unreliable narrator. This is by design, and it is up to the reader to figure out what is going on.

Gary says

OK, I love Wolfe. He is one of the best writers alive or just perhaps one of the best writers period.

This book is great because, well, it's all about the world of the inhumus ... but none of the book takes place there. It all takes place way later as Horn is taking care of other troubles on Blue... you pick up what happened on Green by way of recollections and waking dreams.

Horn is both a smart guy and incredibly dumb ... doesn't he ever look in a mirror or listen to his bird? Like Silk, he's a bit disappointing as a Messiah figure, never quite getting with the program as their moral failings

keep them shy of real transformation. We'll see what they can do in return to the whorl which I'm almost done with. Put it this way, the story gets increasingly fragmented -- you keep up with a new main plot every 20 pages or so and it's often a recollection from one plot line that moves another forward.

Good schtuff.

Anthony says

Shoot. I wanna give this four stars but the truth is at this point in the ongoing saga I'm a little weary. (Just one left)

If you count the books from "Book of the New sun" then this is the 9th ! book in this series and Wolfe's formidable tricks & games with narrative and plot can be grueling . . . especially when he is playing the tried and true story tellers game of withholding key information. In this case it is the mystery of how the Inhumali aliens ever got onto the starship way back in the previous series in the first place.

Still . . . I have to admit I am amazed to think that Wolfe had the planning & foresight to plant the key mystery to this series 4 books back. If it was chess you would say he plays a very deep game. Another reason I consider Wolfe a top-notch writer: he exhibits the sort of ruthlessness that you find in great writers, that willingness to suddenly kill of characters which is always somehow surprising. You definitely never quite know what to expect next.

Also this book just might have the goofiest cover art OF ALL TIME!

Yorgos St. says

a m a z i n g

Perry Whitford says

After escaping the effects of war in Gaon, our confused narrator finds himself in a similar situation in a new town, where his inherent leadership qualities again draw him reluctantly into a conflict.

He tries, as always, to do the thing that will create the least harm, advising with an equal mixture of wisdom and humility in beautifully measured sentences, albeit with more than the occasional instance of pedantry (indeed, there is a general trend towards the pedantic in latter-day Wolfe).

The planet Green itself is clearly a representation of Hell, a place so horrid that Wolfe avoids directly describing it, instead visiting it through some of his favourite narrative devices, such as dreamlike sequences or a "story within a story".

In many ways much of this book does in fact resemble a waking dream - or rather a nightmare - as the narrator tries to come to terms both with the things he has seen and with the person he has become.

The middle book in a trilogy can often be a difficult proposition, where a plot needs to be advanced but

cannot be completed, characters needs to be developed without achieving their destiny. This constant sense of irresolution can stifle the flow of a story, weigh it down.

With Wolfe, however, it's rarely a problem because he weaves such a bewildering, deliberately obscure narrative, where even his endings rarely reveal a fraction of all the secrets, so *In Green's Jungles* never feels like a stop-gap.

Through both the mysteries of his story (e.g. how does Horn become Silk? or how does Horn/Silk transport himself and others to Green) and of his themes (i.e. how to communicate with and understand God?), Wolfe likes to withhold information with one hand whilst scattering it strategically with the other.

Wolfe is capable of stuff so above and beyond the usual fantasy writer that he can do all this, can obfuscate at every turn, yet still entertain and delight.

Masterful, philosophical and deeply strange.

Scott says

The second volume of the Short Sun trilogy, and the 11th book in Gene Wolfe's massive and mind-blowing "Solar Cycle", is another excellent work. Continuing the story of Horn, a rather bit character in the middle Long Sun series, this one follows Horn between the planets Blue and Green. The real trick is that Horn is narrating two of his own stories - one in the present and one from the past. On top of this, his physical appearance has shifted somehow, though we don't really know the reason. As with nearly all other Wolfe novels, many things are hinted at and incredible revelations are made, but they are only there if the reader is paying VERY close attention. The over-arching theme of a man who is trying to live up to almost impossible standards of morality can get lost in the science-fiction elements, but to do so would short-change yourself as a reader. I'll definitely return to this one after I finish the final volume, and I'll undoubtedly get even more out of it.

Alex says

I struggled, and struggled, and struggled to get into this trilogy, and have concluded that it's just not for me. I had to put this book down for lack of interest, something I almost never do.

My impression is that Wolfe fell into a rut here, in which he could not avoid having all of his characters speak with the same rhythm and voice. Wolfe's no amateur and I suspect the fans of these novels are right that he had a distinct literary purpose for doing things this way, the unreliable narrator and all that. But the narrator isn't compelling, so onto the shelf this one goes.

Fantasy Literature says

Gene Wolfe has earned a reputation for writing novels that benefit from being read twice. His works are often complex and they do tend to reward careful reading, so much so that it's not uncommon to hear prospective readers asking which of his Solar Cycle works is the easiest to read. Wolfe's *Book of the Short Sun* trilogy is certainly not the place to start, but it is an otherwise fine finish to this distinguished cycle of

stories that bridge the gap between fantasy and science fiction, and for some readers, between literary and genre fiction.

In *The Book of the New Sun*, Severian is tasked with saving Earth and its dying sun. In *The Book of the Long Sun*, Wolfe tells the story of a generation ship that was launched to a nearby star... [Read More: http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...](http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...)

Althea Ann says

The sequel to "On Blue's Waters". Here, Horn continues his dual, tangential narrative of his life and adventures.

I have to admit that I believe I liked the previous book slightly more - in this volume I found the newly-introduced concept of psychic(?) travel between planets to be far-fetched, in the context of the story. It's often problematic, for me, when some really major new gimmick comes in when the story is already well in progress...

ALso, I really wanted more of the planet Green. The narrator, at one point, admits that he believes he has failed to make the horrors of Green come alive for his reader - and, unfortunately, I felt that it was true.

'Dreams' and passing mentions weren't really enough, I felt.

Still, these are slight criticisms of what is overall, still an extremely impressive work, and one I would definitely recommend.

Adam Vine says

Started slower than first *Short Sun* book - a lot slower, to the point I almost quit. But by the end it proved to be a worthy sequel, with a bevy of GW easter eggs. I was interested to learn more about the Vanished People, and why they, well, vanished. Also, the scene in the City of the Inhumi where Horn is describing how the jungle reclaimed the towers is my favorite description of that type of thing ever put to paper. I still have a ton of questions about the narrator, and about what actually happened in the story, which is typical for me of a first read-through of a GW novel. But I'll save them, and my reread, for after I finish volume three. Overall, the *Short Sun Cycle* is monumentally different in style and mythic scope than the *New Sun* and *Long Sun* books, but is as entertaining and labyrinthine as you expect. My one major complaint is that the end sort of fizzled out, with no real resolution, and the real climax of the story came much earlier, but that's a forgivable sin for the second part of a trilogy.

Jeffrey says

If you haven't figured out that the narrator is not quite all there by the time you start this one, it quickly becomes obvious here. The style of the first book is abandoned as Horn's present day travels become much more involved, and our glimpses of his past get more confused and terse. I loved every minute and flew through this book. Puzzles posited in the first book get deeper, new stranger ones get added, and we are treated to see more of the distinctly dim doom the protagonist seems to be under as a natural leader of people.

Daniel says

This is an absolute masterpiece.

Paul Nash says

Gene Wolfe is simply one of the best novelists we have -- read the entire series, as there are layers within layers, and a subtle, haunting quality that grows and develops, especially in this book.

Lucardus says

Wolfe ist schwer zu bewerten. Aber im Vergleich zu "Book of the New Sun" und "The Book of the Long Sun" ist dieser Zyklus noch kryptischer und unzugänglicher. Zumindest beim ersten Lesen. Wolfe spielt wieder mit Identität. Am Ende des Buches ist nicht klar, wer der Erzähler eigentlich ist. Entweder, dies löst sich im abschließenden Band auf, oder Wolfe lässt wieder Raum für Doktorarbeiten, die sich mit den versteckten Ebenen in seinem Werk befassen.

Da ich phasenweise doch schwergetan habe, den Roman wirklich interessant zu finden, gibt es nur 3 Punkte. Möglicherweise gewinnt der Zyklus bei erneutem Lesen, aber das vertage ich auf spätere Zeiten.
