

IGJ tidbits

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Feb 2002

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Michael Straight — 11 Feb 2002, 03:32

1. Y'all probably caught this the first time, but it was only on the second reading I noticed the real purpose of the fireworks at the Battle of Blanko: cover for Incanto so he could use the azoth to wipe out the cavalry!

2. The first time, I was really annoyed by the chapter "Say Father" in which Incanto takes Hide up to Fava's grave for a chat. I think it was because it was so different from what I expected. Also, there was something really weird about the way Incanto was talking, I was almost fearing he was going to do something nasty to Hide (this was just after he'd wished for an animal to offer as sacrifice to the Outsider, and I was wondering if Wolfe would do some kind of Abraham and Issac thing).

But reading it the second time, I really liked this chapter. A lot of the weirdness is Incanto trying to stay calm to avoid the baletiger, the bit where he asks Hide to hold his staff and walk behind him is just so he can use his walk-through-brush magic to lead Hide by a path he hopes the tiger can't follow.

On the first reading, I thought Incanto was being tediously coy, as I wanted him to just come out and tell Hide what had happened. But this way makes much more sense, as he tries to break it to Hide very gently. (After all, how would you react if some stranger came up to you and said, "Your father is dead, but his spirit has possessed my body, partially, so I am your father.") Anyway, thinking more seriously how hard and weird this would be for Hide, I think the conversation there is great.

3. In general, I'm noting that frequently Wolfe sets you up to think you're going to hear a conversation about an event, that he's going to dole out a little more of that plot he's got you craving, but instead the conversation meanders off into something that's more about the thoughts and feelings of the characters. I think this choice of writing about people rather than events is very deliberate, reflecting the priorities of the narrator and of Wolfe himself.

It sounds unremarkable to say an author focuses on character over plot, but I think Wolfe's unique spin is to make the reader get very preoccupied with the plot, and then redirect him to the people.

-Rostrum