

V.R.T., Marsch, and "A Story"

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adam louis stephanides — 17 Jun 1998, 20:18

On Wed, 17 Jun 1998 alga wrote:

Do we think that "A Story" was written by Marsch alone or by the JVM/VRT amalgam? If it were placed last in the sequence, surely the latter. As it is, still probably the latter. But it's still a kind of fairy tale, not anything we can really rely on.

I'm morally certain it was written by V.R.T. (See below on the "amalgam.") As you and others have pointed out, Marsch is far too insensitive, especially regarding the Annese, to write anything like it. The only problem is that I recall reading an interview with Wolfe in which he says Marsch wrote it. I don't remember where but I remember him saying this distinctly, because I already thought at the time that V.R.T. wrote "A Story." Maybe Wolfe meant only that the person calling himself Marsch wrote V.R.T. Or maybe he'd briefly forgotten that V.R.T. wrote "A Story." If all other lines of defense failed, I would have to say that while Wolfe may have meant to have Marsch write "A Story," in the story Wolfe wrote V.R.T. wrote "A Story." (I keep meaning to read the famous essay by Wimsatt and somebody attacking the "intentional fallacy.")

I don't think Veil's Hypothesis could possibly be true by evidence of VRT himself. Assume that he really is half-abo, and that in some way I can't pretend to understand, his personality has merged with that of JVM. Perhaps, like his mother, he can change his appearance--that thick black beard would help--but he also seems to have absorbed a good deal of JVM's learning, vocabulary and curiosity (he knows what Mr. Million is, for instance, a machine and tool if ever there was one, and about clones), and I find it hard to believe that, as #5 accuses, he learned everything from books on Ste. Anne.

I hadn't seen this thoery of V.R.T. merging with Marsch before, but I have to stick to my belief that V.R.T. is just impersonating Marsch in the ordinary way, perhaps aided by his shape-shifting abilities if he has them. I don't find it implausible that he learned all his anthropology from books on Ste. Anne and St. Croix; he had three years in the wilderness to study Marsch's books, and could read more in the libraries. In particular, his knowledge of "anthropological relaxation," which another poster had cited, could have been picked up in the local library after he's realized what the Wolfes are. His learning doesn't have to be very deep. Who does he have to convince? A dilettante who may have ceased following the literature years ago, some moderately-informed laymen who have access to the same sources he does, and the anthropological faculties on the sisterworlds, which are bad (this is by V.R.T.'s own testimony, but there's no reason to doubt it) and are no doubt already predisposed to be impressed by the visiting professor from Earth. And IIRC it was never claimed that Annese couldn't intellectually comprehend machines and tools, just that they couldn't make or use them.

What convinces me that V.R.T. has not merged with Marsch, aside from the lack of any indication that any Annese have this ability, is the drastic change in personality evident between Marsch's real journal entries and V.R.T.'s entries. It's so great that, with the benefit of hindsight, it's hard to see how anyone could have doubted that V.R.T. replace Marsch.

--Adam