

The Wizard by Gene Wolfe - too much like previous Wolfe

The Usenet list — 38 messages, 19 voices, 04 Nov 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/usenet/63>

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JavaJosh — 04 Nov 2005, 13:23

The Wizard is volume two of "The Wizard Knight" saga. It trades engeneer magic for the magic of erudition - a disappointment since Wolfe's work is replete with the latter, short on the former, and all things being equal innovation would be preferred. Indeed, the plotting, pacing, and most importantly the voice returned to Severian and Silk in force.

Much time is spent away from Able in the beginning of this book, and instead follows Toug. Able returns after about 100 pages 20 subjective years from Skai, where he's been feasting and fighting with the Valfather and his Overcyn children, but only a short time has passed on Mythregar. In addition, much time is spent in Jotunland, the land of the Frost Giants, and truth be told this place isn't nearly as interesting as the many varied places in The Knight. It is cold, rocky, and filled with miserable people, and we spend about 200 pages there. The last 200 pages are an almost surreal battle with the Osterlings.

The strange, revelatory Wolfe-gene shows itself much more strongly in this book. There are several of the frustratingly opaque turns of plot and dialogue which, to my mind, only serve to alienate the reader and remove him from the action. At least *I* feel alienated when I come to a full stop and ask myself, "What on earth was *that*, and why did that happen?"

These Wolfian revelations seem to all take on the same pattern - the protagonist is in one place, and another major character enters with some urgent information, and is interrupted by the entrance of another major character who begins to confess something, when the protagonist must call for a fourth major character to confess something of his own, but as soon as the fourth character enters, the protagonist quite coldly states that they wish to kill the first character, but that it must wait, and finally the protagonist leaves the room to go do something, with all 4 major characters presumably staring at each other wondering what the hell just happened. Mix in a lot of metaphysical confusion and even issues of mundane identity and you get a bitter, choking draught of a scene.

This happened only twice in The Knight and it certainly wasn't as bad as in, most especially, The Book of the New Sun when any lengthy passage with Severian acting rationally came as a relief.

It may occur to someone reading this to deride me for my lack of comprehension and inability to either anticipate these episodes, or failing that, understand them after the fact. While this is possible from your perspective, it is not from mine. It is clear to me that Wolfe enjoys creating tension from half-truths and incomplete communication, and that these scenes describe crescendos of such tension and are something that he enjoys writing. Sometimes pieces are wrapped up later, sometimes not. The problem is not that, as a reader, I disagree with the actions of the protagonist, it is that the protagonist's action is completely incomprehensible, alien and inconsistent with past actions.

It didn't help that Able's voice in this book crept even closer to Severian's and Patera Silk's, when it was already so very close. What was really startling was that Toug's voice moved perceptibly in that direction as well. Toug was Sir Able's squire, and while its possible in that position he'd start talking like his master, it didn't read like that.

I'm not sure what Wolfe's sources were for this - probably Lord Dunsany, which I haven't yet read. Maybe A Once and Future King. For all its problems, it's a thinking man's romp through faerie to be sure, but The Knight was the better romp by far.

Reading this review, I realize that it's fairly poor as it is a first draft. But frankly, I doubt I'll have time or the inclination to write it again, so this will have to do. While reading The Wizard many questions and ideas came up for me, but now that the novel is ended I find that my interest has already waned and those questions forgotten. Maybe if I find a magical stream to restore my memory...

Ron Henry — 04 Nov 2005, 17:22 · in reply to JavaJosh

At least *I* feel alienated when I come to a full stop and ask myself, "What on earth was *that*, and why did that happen?"

It's amazing you've every made it through anything he's written... ;-)

Ron Henry

Elaine Thompson — 04 Nov 2005, 19:55 · in reply to JavaJosh

On 4 Nov 2005 05:23:00 -0800, "JavaJosh" <javajosh at gmail.com> wrote:
The Wizard is volume two of "The Wizard Knight" saga. It trades engenie magic for the magic of erudition - a dissapointment since Wolfe's work is repleat with the latter, short on the former, and all things being equal innovation would be preferred. Indeed, the plotting, pacing, and most importantly the voice returned to Severian and Silk in force.

I remember reading at least two of the Torturer books, but remember absolutely nothing about them except that I eventually realized I wasn't getting anything out of the reading. So I couldn't identify the voice issues you have.

snip

These Wolfian revelations seem to all take on the same pattern - the protagonist is in one place, and another major character enters with some urgent information, and is interrupted by the entrance of another major character who begins to confess something, when the protagonist must call for a fourth major character to confess something of his own, but as soon as the fourth character enters, the protagonist quite coldly states that they wish to kill the first character, but that it must wait, and finally the protagonist leaves the room to go do something, with all 4 major characters presumably staring at each other wondering what the hell just happened. Mix in a lot of metaphysical confusion and even issues of mundane identity and you get a bitter, choking draught of a scene.

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It may occur to someone reading this to deride me for my lack of comprehension and inability to either anticipate these episodes, or failing that, understand them after the fact.

No. I don't remember being bothered by them as much as you although I certainly found them odd. Not standard novel technique. Which leads to what *I* thought Wolfe's sources were.

I had tried several Wolfe books but kept bouncing off. I only picked these up because several people (here and elsewhere) said they were more accessible. They were.

snip

I'm not sure what Wolfe's sources were for this - probably Lord Dunsany, which I haven't yet read.

I have and I didn't get Dunsany echoes much in the reading. I got Malory echoes. In both characterization - or lack of - style, the way events get half started then dropped/interrupted and something else goes on... The non-standard-novel stuff.

Although it's been a *very* long time since I've read Malory.

Elaine Thompson <Elaine at KETHompson.org>

JavaJosh — 04 Nov 2005, 22:43 · in reply to JavaJosh

I'm a bad speller.

JavaJosh wrote:

The Wizard is volume two of "The Wizard Knight" saga. It trades ingenue

ingenue

magic for the magic of erudition - a disappointment

disappointment

since

Wolfe's work is replete

replete

JavaJosh — 04 Nov 2005, 22:45 · in reply to Ron Henry

Ron Henry wrote:

At least *I* feel alienated when I come to a full stop and ask myself, "What on earth was *that*, and why did that happen?"

It's amazing you've every made it through anything he's written... ;-)

He's the most original writer alive. Of course I've read him, and I like him a lot. My review was, on the whole, negative but then I didn't spend much time describing what I did like, only what I didn't. The number one thing I love about Gene Wolfe is that he encourages the reader to savor an experience, be it a battle or a meal or a good conversation. That is unique and to be treasured.

JavaJosh — 04 Nov 2005, 22:54 · in reply to Elaine Thompson

Elaine Thompson wrote:

On 4 Nov 2005 05:23:00 -0800, "JavaJosh" <javajosh at gmail.com> wrote:

The Wizard is volume two of "The Wizard Knight" saga. It trades engeneer magic for the magic of erudition - a disappointment since Wolfe's work is replete with the latter, short on the former, and all things being equal innovation would be preferred. Indeed, the plotting, pacing, and most importantly the voice returned to Severian and Silk in force.

I remember reading at least two of the Torturer books, but remember absolutely nothing about them except that I eventually realized I wasn't getting anything out of the reading. So I couldn't identify the voice issues you have.

Able sounds much older in the second book, and has an academics voice, much as Severian's and Silk's.

snip

These Wolfian revelations seem to all take on the same pattern - the protagonist is in one place, and another major character enters with some urgent information, and is interrupted by the entrance of another major character who begins to confess something, when the protagonist must call for a fourth major character to confess something of his own, but as soon as the fourth character enters, the protagonist quite coldly states that they wish to kill the first character, but that it must wait, and finally the protagonist leaves the room to go do something, with all 4 major characters presumably staring at each other wondering what the hell just happened. Mix in a lot of metaphysical confusion and even issues of mundane identity and you get a bitter, choking draught of a scene.

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I have and I didn't get Dunsany echoes much in the reading.

The Knight's dedication is "Dedicated with the greatest respect to Yes Meynard, author of _The Book of Knights_".

The epigraph is a poem called "The Riders" by Lord Dunsany.

The Wizard's dedications and epigraphs are reversed: "Dedicated with love and respect to Lord Dunsany, the author of 'The Riders'". The epigraph is an excerpt from _The Book of Knights_.

There are strong Arthurian echos, especially in the names of characters: King Arnthor and his

sister Morcaine. Disiri reminds me of the Lady in the Lake. The Isle of Glas could certainly be Avalon.

I got

Malory echoes. In both characterization - or lack of - style, the way events get half started then dropped/interrupted and something else goes on... The non-standard-novel stuff.

Haven't read him. I'm a bad Josh.

JavaJosh — 05 Nov 2005, 01:58 · in reply to JavaJosh

JavaJosh wrote:

The Wizard is volume two of "The Wizard Knight" saga....

I have to admit that I'm a little suprised that these reviews haven't sparked more conversation. Is the subject uninteresting? Is my review really that badly done that it doesn't inspire any critical thoughts?

Just curious (and I haven't and won't take offence if there are no replies to this, either. :)

Mike Schilling — 05 Nov 2005, 02:07 · in reply to JavaJosh

JavaJosh wrote:

The Wizard is volume two of "The Wizard Knight" saga....

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Just curious (and I haven't and won't take offence if there are no replies to this, either. :)

If you want more replies, say that RAH favored the sale of automatic weapons to the unborn..

Konrad Gaertner — 05 Nov 2005, 02:34 · in reply to JavaJosh

JavaJosh wrote:

JavaJosh wrote:

The Wizard is volume two of "The Wizard Knight" saga....

I have to admit that I'm a little suprised that these reviews haven't sparked more conversation. Is the subject uninteresting? Is my review really that badly done that it doesn't inspire any critical thoughts?

You're not alone; google my posts for "responses".

I did read your review, and all I can say is, "thank you for justifying my decision to not read this book."

Konrad Gaertner - - - - - email: gaertk at aol.com

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/kgbooklog/>

"I don't mind hidden depths but I insist that there be a surface."

-- James Nicoll

JavaJosh — 05 Nov 2005, 02:47 · in reply to Konrad Gaertner

Konrad Gaertner wrote:

JavaJosh wrote:

JavaJosh wrote:

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You're not alone; google my posts for "responses".

I did read your review, and all I can say is, "thank you for justifying my decision to not read this book."

LOL. No my intention; I'm just now realizing how one-sided I've been. Everything I wrote is true, but it's by no means the whole story.

"I don't mind hidden depths but I insist that there be a surface."
-- James Nicoll

Very appropriate for Wolfe. Luckily, there is plenty of surface in "The Wizard Knight".

JavaJosh — 05 Nov 2005, 02:47 · in reply to Mike Schilling

Mike Schilling wrote:

JavaJosh wrote:

The Wizard is volume two of "The Wizard Knight" saga....

I have to admit that I'm a little suprised that these reviews haven't sparked more conversation. Is the subject uninteresting? Is my review really that badly done that it doesn't inspire any critical thoughts?

Just curious (and I haven't and won't take offence if there are no replies to this, either. :)

If you want more replies, say that RAH favored the sale of automatic weapons to the unborn..

RAH favored the sale of automatic weapons to the unborn.

Howard Brazee — 05 Nov 2005, 03:12 · in reply to JavaJosh

On 4 Nov 2005 17:58:46 -0800, "JavaJosh" <javajosh at gmail.com> wrote:

I have to admit that I'm a little suprised that these reviews haven't sparked more conversation. Is the subject uninteresting? Is my review really that badly done that it doesn't inspire any critical thoughts?

I tended to agree with them. So I didn't have much to say.

JavaJosh — 05 Nov 2005, 09:36 · in reply to Howard Brazee

Howard Brazee wrote:

On 4 Nov 2005 17:58:46 -0800, "JavaJosh" <javajosh at gmail.com> wrote:

I have to admit that I'm a little suprised that these reviews haven't sparked more conversation. Is the subject uninteresting? Is my review really that badly done that it doesn't inspire any critical thoughts?

I tended to agree with them. So I didn't have much to say.

What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

Thomas Lindgren — 05 Nov 2005, 15:27 · in reply to JavaJosh

"JavaJosh" <javajosh at gmail.com> writes:

What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

A lurking fear that one has failed to Get It?

Religion is sometimes a good topic, so maybe discussing his work and his catholicism could be more inflammatory? Or is he just a too reasonable fellow for that?

Best,
Thomas

Thomas Lindgren

"It's becoming popular? It must be in decline." -- Isaiah Berlin

Wayne Throop — 05 Nov 2005, 19:06 · in reply to Thomas Lindgren

:: What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

: A lurking fear that one has failed to Get It?

I don't have that fear at all. I *know* I don't get it.

Wayne Throop throopw at sheol.org <http://sheol.org/throopw>

Gene Ward Smith — 05 Nov 2005, 19:12 · in reply to Mike Schilling

Mike Schilling wrote:

If you want more replies, say that RAH favored the sale of automatic weapons to the unborn..

Could be a good story about twins or triplets in there. "I've got a source for some Thompson submachine guns, see, and when I get 'em I'm busting out of here. Are ya with me?"

Gene Ward Smith — 05 Nov 2005, 19:15 · in reply to Wayne Throop

Wayne Throop wrote:

:: What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

: A lurking fear that one has failed to Get It?

I don't have that fear at all. I *know* I don't get it.

So is GRRM more controversial because people think they do get it, but just aren't sure they want it? Or is there more a tendency to proclaim "like this book, or else" with him than with Wolfe?

Andrew Plotkin — 05 Nov 2005, 20:20 · in reply to Wayne Throop

Here, Wayne Throop <throopw at sheol.org> wrote:

:: What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

: A lurking fear that one has failed to Get It?

I don't have that fear at all. I *know* I don't get it.

It's not so much a *lurking* fear as a fear that jumps into your lap as you read, butts your arm gently with its forehead, curls up, and begins purring.

--Z

"And Aholibamah bare Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah: these were the borogoves..."

*

I'm still thinking about what to put in this space.

Howard Brazee — 05 Nov 2005, 23:56 · in reply to JavaJosh

On 5 Nov 2005 01:36:13 -0800, "JavaJosh" <javajosh at gmail.com> wrote:
What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

Our favorite authors like him better than we do.

Thomas Lindgren — 06 Nov 2005, 11:55 · in reply to JavaJosh

"JavaJosh" <javajosh at gmail.com> writes:

Howard Brazee wrote:

On 4 Nov 2005 17:58:46 -0800, "JavaJosh" <javajosh at gmail.com> wrote:

I have to admit that I'm a little suprised that these reviews haven't sparked more conversation. Is the subject uninteresting? Is my review really that badly done that it doesn't inspire any critical thoughts?

I tended to agree with them. So I didn't have much to say.

What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

After a bit of rummaging about, I've (re-)found what seems to be an active mailing list on Wolfe's work.

<http://www.urth.net/>

I think I'll go dig out what they thought about The Knight / The Wizard myself; I just _might_ have missed a couple of things.

Best,
Thomas

Thomas Lindgren
"It's becoming popular? It must be in decline." -- Isaiah Berlin

Steve Simmons — 07 Nov 2005, 19:00 · in reply to Wayne Throop

Wayne <throopw at sheol.org> wrote on 11/05/05 at 19:06:

:: What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

: A lurking fear that one has failed to Get It?

I don't have that fear at all. I *know* I don't get it.

For some reason, people who don't get Wolfe seem to realize that there's something in there that they just didn't get. Most other authors that people don't get they don't get that they don't get.

Realize that life is a situation comedy that will never be canceled. A laugh track has been provided, and the reason why we are put in the material world is to get more material.

From "Swami Beyondananda's Guidelines for Enlightenment"

Thomas Lindgren — 07 Nov 2005, 23:17 · in reply to Steve Simmons

Steve Simmons <scs at not.di.these.org.words> writes:

For some reason, people who don't get Wolfe seem to realize that there's something in there that they just didn't get. Most other authors that people don't get they don't get that they don't get.

You wouldn't be looking for a post as Secretary of Defense, would you?

Best,
Thomas

Thomas Lindgren
"It's becoming popular? It must be in decline." -- Isaiah Berlin

Mike Schilling — 07 Nov 2005, 23:21 · in reply to Thomas Lindgren

"Thomas Lindgren" <*****@*****.***> wrote in message news:m3pspc549s.fsf at localhost.localdomain...

Steve Simmons <scs at not.di.these.org.words> writes:

For some reason, people who don't get Wolfe seem to realize that there's something in there that they just didn't get. Most other authors that people don't get they don't get that they don't get.

You wouldn't be looking for a post as Secretary of Defense, would you?

Dammit, you evaluate an author with the preconceptions you've got, not the ones you'd like to have.

JavaJosh — 07 Nov 2005, 23:40 · in reply to Steve Simmons

Steve Simmons wrote:

Wayne <throopw at sheol.org> wrote on 11/05/05 at 19:06:

:: What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

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I don't have that fear at all. I *know* I don't get it.

For some reason, people who don't get Wolfe seem to realize that there's something in there that they just didn't get. Most other authors that people don't get they don't get that they don't get.

Yeah, there is that nagging feeling that whenever a character is behaving in some unfathomably random way that this was a fully intentional breach. Wolfe's tight control of the narration gives that feeling, and the fact that, if you read his stories twice you realize how incredibly detailed his knowledge of the world was even at the beginning. He is the master of subtle forshadowing.

That and the fact that he so patiently scans a relatively narrow viewpoint over his invariably rich worlds makes you feel like he's in control, at least of himself. Most other authors can't contain their exuberance and, like an inexperienced stripper, show everything much too fast. Wolfe is patient. And now I think that was an unfortunate simile. :)

But I believe that you can't hide behind reputation forever, and that even the best writers flub their scenes. :)

JavaJosh — 07 Nov 2005, 23:52 · in reply to Gene Ward Smith

Gene Ward Smith wrote:

Wayne Throop wrote:

:: What is it about Wolfe that fails to spark controversy?

: A lurking fear that one has failed to Get It?

I don't have that fear at all. I **know** I don't get it.

So is GRRM more controversial because people think they do get it, but just aren't sure they want it? Or is there more a tendency to proclaim "like this book, or else" with him than with Wolfe?

I'm not sure what GRRM controversy of which you speak, but he's a much different writer. He takes the almost-omniscient-loose-following POV character approach, which is a more common voice and so more accessible. GRRM is artistically very straightforward; the problems are mostly matters of plot. Wolfe seems to enjoy the fantasy genre in its own right, but, like Herbert, seems to be concerned about issues of consciousness, identity, and imagination (this is much plainer in "The Wizard Knight" than his previous works). Wolfe's work has a dream-like patina over it - the narrator sounds like he doesn't talk about things not because he didn't think of them, but because they really don't matter.

GRRM's *_Song_* is a much plainer tale of simply motivated creatures interacting with each other in a complicated game of thrones. He doesn't tweak your perspective like Wolfe does. There are more concrete things to talk about with Martin. There are plenty of questions about "The Wizard Knight", such as, what really happened to Able the first time he went to Aelfrice, who is Parka and why was Able so unquestioning about the whole thing? What did his bowstring signify? How come young Able was so violent, albeit in an amiable way? How did he adapt so easily to Mythregar? *_Song_* questions tend to be more of the "who's gonna kill whom and when" sort.

Andrew Wheeler — 07 Nov 2005, 23:53 · in reply to JavaJosh

JavaJosh wrote:

JavaJosh wrote:

The Wizard is volume two of "The Wizard Knight" saga....

I have to admit that I'm a little suprised that these reviews haven't sparked more conversation. Is the subject uninteresting? Is my review really that badly done that it doesn't inspire any critical thoughts?

Just curious (and I haven't and won't take offence if there are no replies to this, either. :)

I had a reaction somewhat similar to yours. I read the two novels back-to-back, though, and I've wondered since then if the fact that

Knight was set in type and *_Wizard_* was in manuscript made it feel like the latter was slower and less interesting. But you seem to have had a very similar reading experience, without the format issues.

As you say, Wolfe is the master of the scene in which things almost happen, but don't quite do so. Sometimes (as in "Book of the New Sun" or "Book of the Short Sun"), the things that **don't** happen are important and clear and stunning. I didn't feel that way with *_Wizard_*; I got lost with Young Knight #1 narrating the stories of Young Knight #2 and Young Knight #3, and I thought, as you seem to, that the extended murder-mystery plot among the giants didn't help anything.

It's a shame, because I **really** wanted the sequel to *_The Knight_* I thought I was about to get.

Andrew Wheeler

--

I have fallen to the dark side:

<http://antickmusings.blogspot.com>

Andrew Plotkin — 08 Nov 2005, 00:24 · in reply to JavaJosh

Here, JavaJosh <javajosh at gmail.com> wrote:

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My one-line review of The Wizard Knight is: Having mastered and then deconstructed the idea of the unreliable narrator, Wolfe has now moved on to the **incompetent** narrator.

--Z

"And Aholibamah bare Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah: these were the borogoves..."

*

I'm still thinking about what to put in this space.

(unknown) — 08 Nov 2005, 01:23 · in reply to JavaJosh

JavaJosh wrote:

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I've just been too busy.

Not only too busy to comment on anything extensively, but actually too busy to finish my copy of Wizard. But over Thanksgiving, I'm planning on rereading Knight and then diving into Wizard.

John S. Novak, III

The Humblest Man On The Net

viv — 08 Nov 2005, 02:01 · in reply to Andrew Wheeler

On Mon, 07 Nov 2005 18:53:28 -0500, Andrew Wheeler

<acwhee at optonline.com> wrote:

As you say, Wolfe is the master of the scene in which things almost happen, but don't quite do so. Sometimes (as in "Book of the New Sun" or "Book of the Short Sun"), the things that **don't** happen are important and clear and stunning.

Not sure what you're trying to say here.

Do you mean certain events or plot threads never materialize the way we anticipate or that they "occur" off-stage, behind the main narrative, like a puppeteer's hand movements, and we

must therefore infer them?

An example perhaps would be edifying...

viv

Robert Hutchinson — 08 Nov 2005, 03:44 · in reply to Mike Schilling

Mike Schilling says...

Thomas Lindgren wrote ...

Steve Simmons writes:

For some reason, people who don't get Wolfe seem to realize that there's something in there that they just didn't get. Most other authors that people don't get they don't get that they don't get.

You wouldn't be looking for a post as Secretary of Defense, would you?

Dammit, you evaluate an author with the preconceptions you've got, not the ones you'd like to have.

Did we read the novel? Yes.

Was there something there to be gotten? Yes.

Did we get it? No.

Robert Hutchinson | "Audiences won't soon forget when the
| thing-we-didn't-know-what-it-was was put into
| the helicopter by the guy we didn't know."
| -- Servo, MST3K, 810, Giant Spider Invasion

JavaJosh — 08 Nov 2005, 05:50 · in reply to Andrew Plotkin

Andrew Plotkin wrote:

Here, JavaJosh <javajosh at gmail.com> wrote:

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My one-line review of The Wizard Knight is: Having mastered and then deconstructed the idea of the unreliable narrator, Wolfe has now moved on to the **incompetent** narrator.

That's funny. Inaccurate, but funny.

I think the key is in the epigraph poem by Lord Dunsany. These things exist only in the twilight of dream, and the Wizard Knight is half dreaming during his adventure and indeed while penning his experiences.

JavaJosh — 08 Nov 2005, 06:26 · in reply to viv

viv wrote:

On Mon, 07 Nov 2005 18:53:28 -0500, Andrew Wheeler
<acwheelee at optonline.com> wrote:

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Do you mean certain events or plot threads never materialize the way we anticipate or that they "occur" off-stage, behind the main narrative, like a puppeteer's hand movements, and we must therefore infer them?

An example perhaps would be edifying...

Interrupted action. As fiction readers we've learned to anticipate certain things. For example, if you were to read:

"She had been aching for a slice of pie for so long her eye lids fluttered at the mere thought. A cherry pie, apple pie, boston cream pie - they all swam langorously in front of her, tempting her.

But of course there was no pie; the pie famine of '68 made sure of that. The word was without pie and more's the pity. So she had to make due with cake and ice cream and she tried to forget pie by whistling tunelessly and thinking about boys. But they were all second to pie.

She made her living spearing apricots with a dainty silver utensil made for the purpose. One day at work she noticed a windowsill in the distance. But this was no ordinary window sill - this window sill was *steaming*. And being no fool, she knew that steam in a window sill could mean *pie*.

Pocketing her gracefully turned apricot spearer into its special velvet pouch, she loped through the apricot grove and over the grassy hill to the little cottage with the steaming windowsill. Her back now against the cottage, she sidled up to the pie, wondering if the owner would be mad if she had a little piece.

"Who goes there!" bellowed a deep voice from around the corner. "I can smell 'ye smellin' me pie. Begone! There ain't none fer ye, so skiddadle!"

Terrified of that booming voice, she fumbled with her apricot spearer, and with a sudden spurt of gumption, walked around the corner to confront the owner of that booming voice.

Much to her surprise, the man was Maddy Mudwinner, an uncle on her mother's side, and always a hoot at the family get-togethers and a mad scrabble player. "Maddy!" she said, laughing, "How on earth did you make a pie? If you love your niece you will give me some!"

Upon seeing his niece, Maddy's coarse face relaxed and wiping his mitten hands on his greasy white apron explained with a smile, "Oh my, well hello little darling! How is the apricot spearing business?"

She sighed with ennui, "It's the same as ever, spearing day in, day out. My technique has gotten quite good. Watch!" with that she flicked her wrist and pinned one of Maddy's apron strings to the rough wooden door standing open behind him.

Hooting with pleasure, Maddy made gestures to come inside, "Oh, it's been too long little one. Come on in and have some pie."

"But uncle", the girl said pulling her utensil out of the door, "there is something I haven't been honest with you about, and I just wouldn't feel right eating your pie without telling you. Do you remember Aunt Margaret?"

Maddy frowned. "Yes. Of course. What about her?"

"You never knew this but it was I who cut off her left index finger during the Lemon festival of '69, you know the one right after the pie famine. She never told you because she knew I was your favorite niece, and then when her head was crushed by Farmer Moony's giant summer squash, it didn't seem like the right time to tell you."

"Bless your heart little one, I forgive you, of course. I've been meaning to tell you something too. I've got a new love, and she's right there next to your foot."

Looking down, she noticed a mole looking up at her, it's blind eyes looking up at the sun and warm wet nose brushing her ankle.

"Uncle, she's a mole!"

"Well, yes." Maddy looked a little abashed. "But love knows no bounds, your mother used to say. Do you think she'll think less of me for loving a mole?"

Without a word the girl flung her apricot spear at the ball of brown fur at her feet. With a sickening thud, the spear stuck out the head of the mole, now lying motionless on the ground.

"I hate moles" she said coldly, wiping her tiny spear, and walked back to her apricot tree to continue her day's work. The sound of Maddy's sobs drifted away.

alexey_r — 08 Nov 2005, 15:55 · in reply to Thomas Lindgren

Thomas Lindgren wrote:

Steve Simmons <scs@not.di.these.org.words> writes:

For some reason, people who don't get Wolfe seem to realize that there's something in there that they just didn't get. Most other authors that people don't get they don't get that they don't get.

You wouldn't be looking for a post as Secretary of Defense, would you?

Best,
Thomas

--

Thomas Lindgren

"It's becoming popular? It must be in decline." -- Isaiah Berlin

Sorry, he is clearly already contracted for the Prime Minister of Russia :)

Brian Palmer — 08 Nov 2005, 19:20 · in reply to JavaJosh

"JavaJosh" <javajosh@gmail.com> writes:

Interrupted action. As fiction readers we've learned to anticipate certain things. For example, if you were to read:

[snip]

Bravo!

I'm awfully glad I'm a Beta, because I don't work so hard.

Dave Conrad — 04 Dec 2005, 04:51 · in reply to JavaJosh

JavaJosh wrote:

It didn't help that Able's voice in this book crept even closer to Severian's and Patera Silk's, when it was already so very close. What was really startling was that Toug's voice moved perceptibly in that direction as well. Toug was Sir Able's squire, and while its possible in that position he'd start talking like his master, it didn't read like that.

I thought that Silk's voice was rather different from Severian's. I found the Urth books to be a bit of a slog the first time I tried to read them, but found the Long Sun books much more accessible. I enjoyed the Urth books much more when I went back to them after a few years. I picked up the short sun books as a SFBC omnibus, but found them difficult to start - I'll give them another try sometime later.

I think of Gene Wolfe as being like literary fudge - they're hick and rich and great if you're in the mood for them, but at other times, they're just too thick and heavy.

Dave

Ted Nolan — 04 Dec 2005, 05:37 · in reply to Dave Conrad

I think of Gene Wolfe as being like literary fudge - they're hick and
Probably the first criticism of Gene Wolfe's style involving the word "hick".

Ted

Dave Conrad — 04 Dec 2005, 10:43 · in reply to Ted Nolan

Ted Nolan <tednolan> wrote:

I think of Gene Wolfe as being like literary fudge - they're hick and
Probably the first criticism of Gene Wolfe's style involving the word "hick".

Ted

yes, that should have been thick.

JavaJosh — 04 Dec 2005, 19:26 · in reply to Dave Conrad

Dave Conrad wrote:

Ted Nolan <tednolan> wrote:

I think of Gene Wolfe as being like literary fudge - they're hick and
Probably the first criticism of Gene Wolfe's style involving the word "hick".

Ted

yes, that should have been thick.

Heh. I read "hick" as being similiar to "tony".