

[big spoiler] Narrative technique in _Return_, and

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 2 voices, 28 Aug 1956

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1112>

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Adam Stephanides — 08 Feb 2001, 10:23

on 2/8/01 6:35 AM, Dan Rabin at wolfe-lists at danrabin.com wrote:
In _Return_, we pretty much get a chapter-by-chapter alternation between the homeward-bound story and the _Whorl_ story, told in very different styles. Homecoming-protagonist pretty much continues his persona from _Green's_, but as Whorl-narrator he adopts a very mannered avoidance of identification with the Whorl-protagonist: he never names that person (always referred to via third-person pronouns or as "the man who...").

Not quite. The third-person sections are not written by the Homecoming-protagonist, but by the editors of BoTSS, Hoof, Hide and their wives, as stated in the Afterword. Which raises the question: why do the editors keep up the ambiguity over the protagonist's identity until almost the end? One possibility is that they don't want to admit that Horn is dead, but there are a couple of problems with this: apparently Hide and Hoof never did believe that the protagonist was Horn (see the start of Hoof's narration on p. 337); and when the editors finally do name the protagonist, they unambiguously call him Silk. Another case where the editors create a mystery and I don't see why: it's clear that "Horn" gives an eye to Pig, but as far as I can recall this is never stated.

--Adam

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

Adam Stephanides — 08 Feb 2001, 12:33 · follows Adam Stephanides

on 2/8/01 5:21 PM, Dan Schmidt at dfan at harmonixmusic.com wrote:
Adam Stephanides <adamsteph at earthlink.net> writes:

| Not quite. The third-person sections are not written by the
| Homecoming-protagonist, but by the editors of BoTSS, Hoof, Hide and their
| wives, as stated in the Afterword.

I thought the Afterword said that they only wrote the last couple of Whorl chapters (after Horn stopped writing).

No: the editors write: "He [the protagonist] left us no written record of his brief sojourns in Old Viron and the West Pole, but he spoke of them often. In this volume we have re-created them to the best of our ability, based upon these conversations." (p. 409)

--Adam

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Jeffrey Meyers — 08 Feb 2001, 13:00 · follows Adam Stephanides

Adam Stephanides <adamsteph at earthlink.net> wrote:
Another case where the editors create a
mystery and I don't see why: it's clear that "Horn" gives an eye to Pig, but
as far as I can recall this is never stated.

It's made explicit in one of the last few chapters. I had the same question after reading the
recovery room section. I wondered if "Horn" had donated his own eye well before he is
described, in passing (I can't find the page # now), as having one eye, or maybe as observing
someone out of his one good eye. Someone else may be able to locate the page number.

Patera Bunny

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

Adam Stephanides — 28 Aug 1956, 00:02 · follows Jeffrey Meyers

on 2/8/01 7:29 PM, Dan Schmidt at dfan at harmonixmusic.com wrote:
Adam Stephanides <adamsteph at earthlink.net> writes:

| on 2/8/01 5:21 PM, Dan Schmidt at dfan at harmonixmusic.com wrote:

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| > Adam Stephanides <adamsteph at earthlink.net> writes:

| >

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| No: the editors write: "He [the protagonist] left us no written record of

| his brief sojourns in Old Viron and the West Pole, but he spoke of them

| often. In this volume we have re-created them to the best of our ability,

| based upon these conversations." (p. 409)

OK, we're remembering the same text, but interpreting it differently.
I took that to mean that he did write about his earlier time in the
Whorl (e.g., meeting Pig and Hound) but the editors picked it up after
he arrived in Old Viron. Otherwise I would have expected them to
write 'the Whorl' rather than 'Old Viron and the West Pole'.

I think that when the editors say "Old Viron," they are including its territory as well (we are told
in the list of "Proper Names in the Text" that Endroad is subject to Viron). In any case "Horn" (I
will leave off the question marks in the future) and company arrive in Old Viron proper in
Chapter Ten, long before the end of Horn's account. I guess it's possible that Horn had written
the third-person sections up to that point and the editors continued the third-person narrative in
Horn's style and interpolated sections throughout the remainder of Horn's account. But I very
much doubt it. For one thing, in the preceding paragraph the editors tell us what Horn did leave
a written account of, and they don't say anything there about the Whorl.

--Adam

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