[big spoiler] Narrative technique in _Return_

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 08 Feb 2001

https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1114

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 08 Feb 2001, 09:52

Dan wrote, and Adam responded:

> 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.

Allow me to interject: I don't think that Horn was completely evacuated from the Horn/Silk/Silk combine (that is Horn spirit/Silk body/mainframe Silk-via-Pig's body spirit) until after the big quest was completed.

Just as Scylla's quest took them on a "tangential" side trip to Urth, so that she could "come home" and be reunited with her original body in her original homeland. Same thing for Horn. Or so it seems to me.

After Horn is laid to rest, the combine is Silk/Silk, or Silk2. Still not cured of that awful melancholy, suggesting that main frame isn't an easy cure-all, but perhaps he is a bit better?

As for editors creating mystery, I think the lack of their fingerprints in IGJ (footnotes, comments) was something larger in that it suggested that they (editors and family) had not received the book.

Part of the difficulty surrounding Horn giving Silk's eye to Pig, it seems to me, is the fact that at precisely this moment, when Pig first looks at his benefactor after the operation, the transfer happens, and Horn/Silk becomes Horn/Silk/Silk.

One of the first tricky questions for me was, "Why would Nettle leave Blue? Why not be a grandmother?" For this I think the biggest answer is probably that she was told the damning secret, and as a result she would be hunted on Blue. Beyond that, well, the colony has gone to hell, time to move on!

What about Seawrack? Here's the weird case where she was Horn's girlfriend, and while the Horn/Silk/Silk combine occassionally confused Seawrack with Hyacinth, still, I don't think that Silk2 is likely to have an affair with Seawrack, just as Horn wouldn't do so with Hyacinth. So why is Seawrack going? She is such a wild, untamed thing, and the Whorl seems like such a domestic scene . . . unless she will live in the Lake as the replacement for Scylla?

Silk2: widower; Nettle: widow; Seawrack: siren; Marble: mother; Oreb: free bird?

But back to Urth--that Scylla's body was in Severian's favorite mausoleum (remember the bronze that has his own features) causes all sorts of big ripples . . . is Severian, at root, a member of the same family? He cannot be Typhon, since Typhon is blond and entombed on Mount Typhon. So if he is a member of the royal family, he must be a son. One of the two sons. A dark son. Perhaps the dark son who had a mildly helpful role in TBOTLS.

=mantis=

Sirius Fiction
Catalog and errata sheet at http://www.sirius.com/~mantis/

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

David DiGiacomo — 08 Feb 2001, 14:16 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

> From: Michael Andre-Driussi <mantis at sirius.com>
> Subject: (whorl) re: [big spoiler] Narrative technique in _Return_
> Date: Thu, 8 Feb 2001 09:52:56 -0800
>
> Part of the difficulty surrounding Horn giving Silk's eye to Pig, it seems to me, is the fact that at precisely this moment, when Pig first looks at his benefactor after the operation, the transfer happens, and Horn/Silk becomes Horn/Silk/Silk.

Is there any reason to think that a god can do a direct bio-bio transfer? If not, the path must have been Pig->glass, glass->Horn/Silk, and it happened shortly after Pig saw Horn/Silk.

It seems odd that Silk in Mainframe hadn't noticed his body long before this, and entered it to see what was going on.

Can anyone think of an explanation for gods uploading themselves via the eyes? Normal eyes are not output devices, unless some sort of twitch code is used, and another part of the body would serve as well for that. Perhaps Pas bioengineered something, but there is no evidence of biotechnology that advanced. It seems like a weak point in the series.

> One of the first tricky questions for me was, "Why would Nettle leave Blue? Why not be a grandmother?" For this I think the biggest answer is probably that she was told the damning secret, and as a result she would be hunted on Blue. Beyond that, well, the colony has gone to hell, time to move on!

I don't think the second reason would be enough to make her go on a trip with Seawrack.

> What about Seawrack? Here's the weird case where she was Horn's girlfriend, and while the Horn/Silk/Silk combine occassionally confused Seawrack with Hyacinth, still, I don't think that Silk2 is likely to have an affair with Seawrack, just as Horn wouldn't do so with Hyacinth. So why is Seawrack going?

The Mother told her to go.

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mark millman — 08 Feb 2001, 17:31 · follows David DiGiacomo

> At 09:52 AM 08-02-01 -0800, Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:
> [snip]
>
> But back to Urth--that Scylla's body was in Severian's favorite mausoleum (remember the bronze that has his own features) causes all sorts of big ripples . . . is Severian, at root, a member of the same family? He cannot be Typhon, since Typhon is blond and entombed on Mount Typhon. So if he is a member of the royal family, he must be a son. One of the two sons. A dark son. Perhaps the dark son who had a mildly helpful role in TBOTLS.
>
> =mantis=

Surely, mantis, Severian is a grandson of Typhon, at nearest, if not a remote descendant. Unless you're prepared to throw out the conclusion that Ouen is Severian's father and Dorcas is Ouen's mother, we know Severian's father is not a member of Typhon's family. That leaves his mother, and unless Typhon & co. were (1) walking the corridors of Time, which, for all their other activities, we haven't known them to do, (2) allowing Echidna to go gallivanting about getting herself impregnated by men other than Typhon (a bad way to ensure the continuity of a royal line, to be sure), or (3) playing body-games -much- more interesting than the one that Typhon tried with Piaton, I don't see how Severian could be a member of Typhon's immediate family.

I'd much prefer the more allegorical explanation that, as the exultant families came to Urth with Typhon, they're all part of his extended "family", latterly including Severian through his mother.

Of course, that still leaves open the question that you're trying to answer, to wit: Why would Scylla insist on being buried in Severian's mausoleum? Perhaps Echidna's original was un-faithful to Typhon, or was already pregnant when she married him, and Cilinia is Severian's daughter.

Nacre

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Jeffrey Meyers — 08 Feb 2001, 18:32 · follows mark millman

> David DiGiacomo <dd at Adobe.COM> wrote:
> Can anyone think of an explanation for gods uploading themselves via the eyes? Normal eyes are not output devices, unless some sort of twitch code is used, and another part of the body would serve as well for that.

A symbolic one: "The eye is the lamp of the body" (Matt. 6:22).

Patera Bunny

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