

[big spoiler] Narrative technique in _Return_

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 08 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1115>

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Spectacled Bear — 08 Feb 2001, 18:13

At 10:23 2001-02-08 +0000, Adamwrote:

...

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.

Well, they *are* writing a book, and you must admit it reads better this way. It's a dramatised account, not a dry history, so I think they did it for the same reason as Wolfe did. Considering the probably influence of the Book of the Long Sun on their literary style, I'm grateful that the Book of the Short Sun is as clear and explicit as it is!

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.

You said it yourself: "it's clear". We can allow them a little literary licence, as long as it doesn't cause actual confusion.

Spectacled Bear.

Adam Stephanides — 10 Feb 2001, 14:21 · follows Spectacled Bear

on 2/8/01 6:13 PM, Spectacled Bear at spectacled.bear at pobox.com wrote:

At 10:23 2001-02-08 +0000, Adamwrote:

...

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In the first place, three of the editors are from an impoverished colony, and at least two are from a family that's not well off; the fourth is a servant. Under these conditions it's unlikely that any of them would have acquired much literary sophistication. And I don't recall any indication that any of them had a literary bent either. So it seems unlikely to me that they would have been interested in the sort of games with narration that Wolfe plays. In the second place,

they're not writing a novel, they're compiling a non-fictional account of their father (or father-in-law) and of the man he admired more than anybody else. Even if they had an interest in narrative mystification, I doubt they would indulge it here.

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You said it yourself: "it's clear". We can allow them a little literary licence, as long as it doesn't cause actual confusion.

I'm willing to "allow them" all the license they want. I just want to know why they did it.

(Incidentally, I had posted a second reply to Dan Schmidt on the authorship of the third-person segments a couple days ago, but without my realizing it my computer had reset the date to 1956, so it may have gotten lost on some systems.)

--Adam

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