

RTTW spoilers, mea culpa

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 11 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1132>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 11 Feb 2001, 18:15

Eek! In my rush to express my intuition that the Silk-to-Horn/Silk transfer happened at a very specific point in the text (when Horn/Silk sees Pig face to face after the operation), not off-stage somewhere (nor anywhere else in time), I temporarily forgot all the monitor-to-eyeball "rules of possession" previously established.

I apologize for that lapse. (Especially easy since there's a monitor there when they meet!)

Another point that I thought was very telling in the text follows: Nettle's reaction to the news that Horn/Silk had knowingly brought an inhuman to Lizard Island.

We can talk endlessly about subtle nuances of diction and poise, "which set is possibly Horn, which set is probably Silk"; we can wonder if any of Horn's children ever really believed (or "believed") that Horn/Silk was their father in any way, shape, or form (well never "form," really); but (Penelope) Nettle's reaction, after the build-up over the book or three about how awful the whole inhuman thing had been, how it had all-but ruined the marriage on both sides, Nettle's few words are enough to speak volumes left unspoken: you are not my husband (he would never do such a thing); you are not the hero Silk we wrote about (he fended off inhuman).

This scene is a series of painful shocks: the death of Jahlee and the unspoken denunciation of Horn/Silk.

The death of Jahlee bugs me more than anything else in RTTW, so I'm surprised she hasn't mentioned it yet <g>. Here is how I see it right now: it is very much like the situation in HUCKLEBERRY FINN, where Twain found himself with a problem. The runaway slave and the white trash boy, happy and free together on their river journey . . . are floating toward the slave block. Going the wrong way. (IIRC, Twain himself put the half-finished manuscript aside for many years, unable to work around this problem; he finally solved it by introducing Tom Sawyer, who made a burlesque of the whole thing).

But what if Huck had to deal with a more realistic, less forgiving situation? Now we switch back to BOTSS, and how happy we were when Horn/Silk called Jahlee his daughter at the end of IGJ! And they continued to "flow down the river" toward Lizard Island and disaster.

But why? Why is Jahlee so bent on it? Well, judging by what happens, we can guess a certain ill intent. And what is Horn/Silk's problem that he cannot dissuade her: is he simply too soft-hearted, to the point that he is being taken in by "Honest John"?

Here's another analogy, this time from within genre: contrast movie "Blade Runner" with novel it is (loosely) based on, DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?. The former makes the "feel good" case that androids are people, too; the latter, while it makes the "feel uneasy" case of "what is human, anyway?", it uses the aforementioned "feel good" notion as a foil that is always being trumped by "no, androids are not human at all: they are killing machines." It is a

powerful and nervy thing for Dick to do, since right from the start he makes the equation that the androids are slaves just like the slaves in America (the ads for the Mars colony mention that it is like the ante-bellum South, iirc); so it is a natural thing for us to want civil rights for androids. Yet it turns into a McCarthy-esque nightmare: the androids have built a hidden empire on Earth, and control the popular media, and are hell-bent on destroying the humans through polluting their minds. (Even then, the story does not become "let's save Earth from these body-snatchers!")

These are unsettling things. Huck and Jim float down the river, and only a "fakey" happy ending tacked on can save it (though some think this nearly ruins the book). The android hunter becomes "soft" on androids, bedding one, etc., and she strikes back in the most pointlessly vindictive way she can (hmmm, does that make the android "more human" <g>). And our Odysseus takes a viper back to his ophiophobic Penelope.

In the end, they leave the world; they don't try to wipe-out the inhumani. (Rather like DADOES, in that way, but for different reasons.)

Other things:

Viscacha thinks Pig's language is more Scottish, and I agree, since I told the same thing to Henry Kaiser a few weeks ago.

Re: Seawrack, and Silk. Speculation on Seawrack containing or having the potential to contain Kypris. One of my initial strange thoughts about Silk's motive for inviting Seawrack along: that she is a good body for Hyacinth to be downloaded into. Hard to believe that Silk would think such a thing, but his Hyacinth obsession . . .

=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.

Adam Stephanides — 13 Feb 2001, 13:07 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

on 2/12/01 2:15 AM, Michael Andre-Driussi at mantis at sirius.com wrote:
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I hope you won't be offended if I ask you where this intuition comes from. I'm sure you understand the book much better than me, but I honestly don't recall anything which even suggests that Silk's spirit is absent from his body when Horn's spirit is transferred in, and is "reloaded" from Pig after the operation (if I understand your position correctly).

--Adam

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Kevin J. Maroney — 13 Feb 2001, 15:05 · follows Adam Stephanides

At 01:07 PM 2/13/01 +0000, Adam wrote:
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To me, the giveaway that there's a huge amount of Silk in "the protagonist" from the moment that Horn moves into his body is the amount of minutiae that he displays about the religion of Pas and the Children while on the _Whorl_.

I know the conversation about "what do you call it when you read the future from the flight of birds?" is with Pig, and I believe he does a full exegesis of an excerpt from the Chrasomological Writings before the scene Michael discusses. The Chrasmomancy in particular strikes me as being unmistakably Silk; in fact, while reading the novel I felt it was somewhat out of character for Horn to be so Silkian. I should know better.....

Anyway, refresh my memory. Does the protagonist indulge in Chrasmomancy before he gives his eye to Pig? If so, I'd say that's strong evidence that he's largely Silk from the moment they merge.

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Adam Stephanides — 14 Feb 2001, 21:59 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

on 2/13/01 8:05 PM, Kevin J. Maroney at kmaroney at ungames.com wrote:
To me, the giveaway that there's a huge amount of Silk in "the protagonist" from the moment that Horn moves into his body is the amount of minutiae that he displays about the religion of Pas and the Children while on the _Whorl_.

Indeed; and not only his knowledge, but the sententiousness with which he dispenses it.

I know the conversation about "what do you call it when you read the future from the flight of birds?" is with Pig, and I believe he does a full exegesis of an excerpt from the Chrasomological Writings before the scene Michael discusses. The Chrasmomancy in particular strikes me as being unmistakably Silk; in fact, while reading the novel I felt it was somewhat out of character for Horn to be so Silkian. I should know better.....

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He does, in Chapter 12, with Olivine, an exegesis that takes several pages. Very Silkian.

There are additional signs of Silk's presence in "Horn" on the Whorl. For one thing, there is his strong visceral reaction to the knife he finds at his feet (13-14). I don't see how to explain this, other than that he unconsciously remembers this knife injuring him. For another, almost as soon as "Horn" appears on Whorl, he is thinking about Hyacinth and of how much he wanted her and how much better things would have been if he had gotten her (this motif recurs later, though I can't find the place at the moment).

--Adam

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