

RTTW spoilers, the main narrator

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 13 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1150>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 13 Feb 2001, 12:56

Adam quoted and wrote:

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 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).

IIRC, as Horn lay dying in the lander on Green, the deal expressed by the Neighbors was something like: from two broken men we will make one whole man. And since Horn's "broken" nature was a dead body, well, it seemed as if the broken part of Silk was something different, for example, a spirit/soul that was seeking oblivion. So if this is true, then Horn's healthy spirit is poured into Silk's healthy body (which also just happens to be on the Whorl, where Horn had been trying to go).

We have plenty of cases in Wolfe's fiction where two complete spirits are in one body: Severian and Thecla, the serpent magician in the Soldier books. We also have ambiguous cases, like Jonas-in-Miles, or the case of Jolenta (possession by a vision?). We also have cases (BOTLS) where fragments are left behind after a possession, and the same may be true when a spirit is vacated from its original body (so it need not be an "absolutely either/or" situation).

To turn your question around: if, as you seem to be saying, Silk's spirit =was= already in Silk's body, and Horn's spirit is in there, too (a Severian/Thecla situation: the Neighbor maybe should have said "you will be a crutch for a broken man--until he heals" rather than that other way of two broken men being used to make one whole man? Certainly seems true, in a sense, in retrospect!), then I fail to see the drive/point/goal of the narrator in making sure that he catches the spirit from Pig when it comes out. Presumably the spirit in Pig is Silk-from-mainframe, right? So . . . what? You already have a 100% Silk spirit in that body, along with a 100% Horn spirit. Why have 200% Silk?

Please explain your own sense of it all. Is the spirit in Pig not Silk at all, despite the suggestions surrounding Pig's behavior with the ghost (Hyacinth, do you think?) in the mansion? If it is not Silk, who is it--Pas himself (at which point the mansion ghost is . . . Kypris?)? So the goal is to become Silk/Pas/Horn?

My model is that yes, Silk's spirit was weak and left; Horn's spirit entered; Silk's spirit and Horn's body both left the picture. At some time before this, either a long time (if we believe Pig's tale of odyssey) or a shorter time than that, for one reason or another, that version of Silk-in-mainframe that we saw so briefly in BOTLS was downloaded into Pig. Had

Silk-in-mainframe been cured of his melancholy? Was he new and improved and intended to "upgrade" Silk? (If so, then why not just beam directly into Silk himself? Was his area a "no monitor" zone?) Was Silk-in-mainframe going out on a quest of his own (could be anything, but probably "no more landings, get ready to voyage again"), and this was sabotaged by the crippling loss of eyes? At which point, perhaps, the interrump quest became "Find Silk; then complete the quest"?

So my model is that the Silk-in-Pig is not the same spirit as the Silk that left Silk's body. Silk-in-Pig is perhaps the scan from a happier Silk (again recalling the vision we had of Passilk in TBOTLS), before everything fell apart at the end of TBOTLS, and certainly long before the series of political defeats, heartbreaks over Hyacinth while she was alive and the crushing experience after her death.

Looking forward to seeing your model.

=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 — 16 Feb 2001, 10:54 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

on 2/13/01 8:56 PM, Michael Andre-Driussi at mantis at sirius.com wrote:
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I agree with all of this; in fact, the Neighbor says he will send Horn's spirit "into someone whose own spirit is dying." I think that this means just what you say above: that Silk's spirit was seeking oblivion, not that it was on its way out of Silk's body.

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Severian/Thecla situation: the Neighbor maybe should have said "you will be a crutch for a broken man--until he heals" rather than that other way of two broken men being used to make one whole man? Certainly seems true, in a sense, in retrospect!), then I fail to see the drive/point/goal of the narrator in making sure that he catches the spirit from Pig when it comes out.

Here is where I was misunderstanding you: I had not realized you thought that Horn had deliberately sought to get Silk-from-mainframe downloaded into him from Pig. Now that you say this, I can see that there is some evidence in the book to support this: there is the extraordinary effort "Horn" makes to visit Pig, and at the start of Chapter 18, "Horn" denies that it was "'good a' yer'" to visit Pig, and says "'I came so that you might see me.'" But I don't believe it, for several reasons. For one thing, possession doesn't happen automatically, and "Horn" never asks Silk-in-mainframe to enter him, or at least we are never told about it. Okay, maybe it happened

before he got a chance to ask, and he knew this. But that comes up against my second point. In the dialogue with Silk-in-Pig on p. 374, "Horn" doesn't sound like he's expecting or hoping that Silk-in-mainframe will or has entered him. He believes he has failed.

The third point: at the end of Chapter 16, as "Horn" is crawling to Pig, "At his elbow Crane's ghost murmured, 'Is it really worth all this to fight free of Hari Mau for an hour or two, Silk?'" Assuming that it is not really Crane's ghost talking (and why would he be hanging around the West Pole?) it is either "Horn"'s unconscious, or "Horn" imagining what the sardonic Crane would say; in either case it is really "Horn" speaking. But if "Horn"'s visiting Pig were a plan to fulfill his mission, "Horn" would not accuse himself of seeking just "'to fight free of Hari Mau for an hour or two.'" ("Crane"'s words are also further evidence that Silk's spirit is already present in "Horn"; "Horn" would hardly hallucinate or imagine Crane's ghost calling him "Silk" if it were just a question of physical resemblance.)

I think that "Horn" went to visit Pig because he was his friend, with possibly a touch of the motive "Crane" attributes; and that his denial that it's "'good a' yer'" is just his modesty.

So . . .

what? You already have a 100% Silk spirit in that body, along with a 100% Horn spirit. Why have 200% Silk?

This would not be much of an obstacle to my theory, in any case: if "Horn" doesn't realize he is Silk already, he might well seek to get Silk downloaded into him. But in fact I don't believe he sought to get Silk, or anybody else, downloaded into him, so the point is moot.

Looking forward to seeing your model.

Most of my model you've seen already, and the rest I've said above, but I'll summarize it: Silk tries to commit suicide. The dying Horn's spirit is projected into Silk by the Neighbor. Silk and Horn's spirit merge, with Silk's personality dominant but burying its identity in Horn's memories. Pig is possessed by Silk-in-mainframe (I have no opinion on when this happened, or on what era Silk this is), but Silkhorn does not seek to be possessed by Silk-in-mainframe, nor is he. Eventually Horn's spirit disappears from Silkhorn, for obscure reasons, and shortly afterwards Silk is brought to realize his true identity.

In another post, mantis wrote:

Yes, well put. However, Adam, wouldn't it be an even stronger case if the world-weary Silk-who-saw-Hyacinth-dead was gone and replaced by a fresh Silk-who-did-not-even-know-she-was-sick? So that the only one in that body who knew the complete truth about Hyacinth was the Horn spirit.

But Pig has seen the dead Hyacinth (and knows it is her) and tells Hound about it (83). Silk-in-Pig would be aware of Hyacinth's death at this point, if not before.

Thus, a new-Silk "coming up to speed on the events of the last few years" rather than old-Silk being completely delusional.

I'm afraid I don't follow you here. Why does new-Silk's "coming up to speed" have as a consequence his not manifesting himself in Horn (at least not that we see) until he reads the hyacinth passage, at which point he takes over completely?

The narrator must know that he isn't "Silk" (whether this is "oldSilk" or "mainframeSilk" or "litSilk," or some combination thereof, doesn't matter at the moment) but he must have some inkling that the Silk-he-is-not exists somewhere else (mainframe, for example, the place where the dead folk go).

I think that the narrator knows he is in Silk's body, but still this is something that is constantly being grappled with internally, as well as externally, since everybody he meets assumes that he is Silk.

[snip]

Now, when the narrator strongly suspects that there is a Silk in Pig, obviously (according to the reasoning above) he would get very excited. Must get that Silk!

To avoid misunderstanding, let me summarize what I think you're saying: Horn knows that he's in Silk's body and that he isn't Silk, so he knows that the quest to bring back the physical Silk is a failure. But then he discovers Silk-in-Pig, and realizes he can fulfill his quest by letting this Silk possess him. But if this model were correct, then once Horn gets confirmation that Silk is possessing Pig, he should refocus his quest on curing Pig's blindness. And this doesn't happen. When he meets Calde Bison, he asks him where Silk is, and is in despair when Bison says he doesn't know (286). And, mulling over his time in New Viron, the narrator writes: "When the Prolocutor had me sacrifice in the Grand Manteion ... it tipped the scales toward failure. Had I not acceded to his request, I might have found Silk, whom I heard was staying at our inn, although only when it was too late." (264) Neither of these passages makes sense if Horn's goal at this point is to cure Pig's blindness; both imply he is still searching for the physical Silk. (The latter is also further evidence that the narrator still cannot admit to himself he is in Silk's body.)

But judging by the results, which happen before the first word of TBOTSS is written, the Silk he got wasn't the Silk he was looking for.

So (again to avoid misunderstanding) at some point Horn "tried out" the downloaded Silk-in-Pig in him and discovered that, for some reason, it wouldn't do. But the end of the scene with Remora doesn't fit with this model. Remora says: "'Horn did not fail us, Patera. Calde. You see that now?' Silk nodded." If your model were correct, Silk's response should have been "But he did fail, because I'm not the Silk that New Viron needs [or whatever the reason was]."

There is also the question of why none of these events--Horn's decision to seek to get Silk-in-Pig downloaded into himself, the actual downloading, and the testing and rejection of the downloaded Silk--are mentioned in the text. Was Horn so embarrassed by the fiasco that he decided not to say anything about it to anyone? Even if there wasn't so much evidence against your model, the fact that it relies on so many crucial events not mentioned in the text would make me very reluctant to accept it.

--Adam

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

Spectacled Bear — 16 Feb 2001, 18:15 · follows Adam Stephanides

At 10:54 2001-02-16 -0600, Adam Stephanides wrote:
on 2/13/01 8:56 PM, Michael Andre-Driussi at mantis at sirius.com wrote:

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Right

Yes. Why do we need all the stuff about the fragment in Pig? I didn't see any evidence for it in the text, and it simply seems unnecessary. Adam makes a far better case against it than I could have assembled - thanks, Adam!

Spectacled Bear.