

RTTW spoilers, Delusional and/or Quixotic

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 17 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1180>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 17 Feb 2001, 15:54

Just talking to myself here, explaining two angles of the narrator, as I seem them.

"Delusional" is the angle where 100% Silk is present in the narrator from the transfer moment from Green to Whorl. The Horn content of the narrator can be set at 0, at which point "100% Delusional": The "mad man" theory, if you will--total validation of what Calde Mint sees, with no further complications. The narrator is Silk/is not Horn, and just needs time to adjust to this state. (* more on this, see below)

"Quixotic" is the term I use for the angle that appears to be a quest to find or become a person who only exists in a book. Don Quixote himself (50% Delusional? <g>) lives in a world created by a library of heroic romances; his self-created persona and subsequent life and death is an approximation of the fictional made real (or made real again). Horn's initial situation is more analogous to this: imagine Spain is in deep trouble, and Cervantes is charged with bringing Don Quixote to rule Madrid, since everybody loves and respects Don Quixote and would happily submit to his rule (however much it might resemble the reign of "Emperor Norton").

The way I see it, these two angles can be exclusive (for example, 100% Delusional can have little use for Quixotic), and they can work together in some combinations, but there are some combinations where they do not work so well. And unfortunately, all the other characters would likely see "Quixotic" as "Delusional" (as in the case of Don Quixote).

Personally, I can accept the reading that there was not spirit exchange between Pig and N, that it was just a friendly meeting to forstall the inevitable, but the build-up and the event itself seemed like something else to me.

The appearance of Doctor Crane's ghost does not "solve" anything for me, since I see Crane as being one of the primary authors of Calde Silk in TBOTLS, at least according to Horn (who has any idea what Crane means to Silk?), and since I tend to think that Horn is seeing this ghost (rather than Silk alone), well then--it is another log for the Quixotic stack.

* further refinement/muddling of "Delusional"--well obviously there are at least two main flavors of Delusional here: Silk-Delusional (a Silk spirit who says "I'm not Silk," etc., the Lear-sized loonie seen by Calde Mint) and Horn-Delusional (a Horn spirit who says "I'm not Silk," if and only if there really =is= some Silk spirit in there; otherwise he is not delusional!).

=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.

Alex David Groce — 17 Feb 2001, 21:17 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

<snipped>

Nice post, mantis.

Note that there is also Nutria's reading: Horn isn't delusional, but his family & Remora (our editors) are.

I find the most convincing reading to be a mixture of the Quixotic and the delusional: Horn and Silk are both present in the body from the moment of the transfer from Green. Silk, however, is in a funk--while he contributes to the actions of Silkhorn, at first he does not wish to acknowledge himself as still alive. Equally, Horn doesn't want to admit to himself that he's "dead," but certainly can't say "I'm Silk now"--both because he's sane enough to know that he isn't the Silk that New Viron needs, even if he is the real Silk in some sense. He's also having a hard time admitting that Silk is in him wishing he were dead. The Long Sun narration makes it clear that the little suicide scene on top of the airship was traumatic for Horn. This is much worse.

The behavior ends up being very Silkish because both Horn (& the slowly emerging real Silk) view "book Silk" as a very good man. After all, though Horn invented, to some extent, "book Silk," where do we think he got his idea of what a good man is?

Remora doesn't drive Horn out as in an exorcism so much as force Silkhorn to acknowledge that by this point Horn has faded away--he can die now, because he hasn't failed, really. Silk has become willing to live by this point, but isn't willing to admit he's alive. Horn has become less and less essential, but cannot admit to himself that he is dead until Silk no longer needs him.

So, why, having become himself again, does Silk take off to return to the whorl?

As I see it, Silk sees that the two problems facing the colonists are not ones he can solve. p. 314 is the crucial point. First, Silk considers the government of New Viron. The _real Silk_, we know, gave up rulership in Viron once it became clear that he could not rule without forcing his will upon an unwilling populace. New Viron is in much worse state. "Silk would pray, of course." If prayer and the influence of "book Silk" are all (hardly nothing, I would say) he can do, he can do that as well from the Whorl, where he may really be needed. Also, remember that at this point it is mostly Silk running the show. Silk's home is the Whorl. He was willing to leave when it was the order of Pas and the Outsider, but even then he turned back for Hyacinth, and never left, though surely he had opportunities over the years. He is a stranger on Blue.

The second problem is that of the inhumani, and again, it is the problem of evil. Indeed, despite his having discovered the humanity of the inhumani, Silkhorn is still himself capable of murdering his daughter when she attacks Nettle. He knows enough to doubt that there is a "solution" to this problem other than the one above--for men to be better than they are.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

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Alex David Groce (agroce+ at cs.cmu.edu)

Ph.D. Student, Carnegie Mellon University - Computer Science Department

8112 Wean Hall (412)-268-3066

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~agroce>

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