

RTTW spoilers, crutch of Horn

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

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1182>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 17 Feb 2001, 20:36

Alex David Groce wrote:

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

Right, that would be 0% Delusional for the narrator; the outsiders cannot grok it, but the Outsider can.

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.

I agree with just about all of the material you posted (I would go on more about how, after all this build up of "natural king" stuff, the events of Gaon, and Viron before that, prove that there is no way Silk can do it right, etc.). I just had this sense that N was grasping at =all= straws (following rumors that Silk was in hotel; catch whatever comes out of Pig's eye; etc.) while he was on the Whorl in an attempt to better complete his mission. It didn't feel to me like he was entirely delusional in his Quixotic quest.

(The whole issue of psychic "fragments" separate from body and spirit might point to a tripart system, like body/soul/spirit. I don't know. But my intuitive model agrees with what Nutria said about how Silk's brainstuff is still there for N to use, just like his super-muscles are, even if Silk's spiritual essence is gone away.)

On to the new topic: if we can agree that "Horn is a crutch," and I can readily go along with that, then suddenly I find myself asking "why?" It is strange, because I went along with it in the book (it especially seemed "right" after the whole wooly "laying Cilinia to rest" thing), but at the moment it seems odd. As if Thecla suddenly imploded ala Master Ash. Or perhaps Jonas imploding within Miles as the news of Jolenta's death gets to him?

The "easy" answer is: well, Thecla was meant to be Severian's female side, his constant companion; she has no goal beyond that, she had no life quest that seeks completion, where completion leads to dissolution. But Horn completes his quest, and is now free to die? So his whole purpose was to be the crutch? (Granted, there's that powerful twin-theme again: one dies, the other is immortal.) Why not stay around? Unless such a state is, er, "a fate worse than death"?

(Note that you are in direct contradiction of Nutria here, since he says that Horn is becoming more like Silk rather than imploding. And I can see his reading, too, fwiw.)

(Eek, come to think of it . . . the equivalent of Thecla imploding might very well be that part in URTN where she appears in her own body, etc . . . hmmm.)

OTOH, if it is Horn back at New Viron, then what is the attempted suicide-by-inhumi-attack, a sort of exorcism of dark Silk through enactment of the thing itself? (I mean, it hardly seems like the sort of thing one is going to do as one becomes "Silkified" . . . unless . . .) And then, having done that, N is a Horn/repaiored-Silk?

=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 — 18 Feb 2001, 20:40 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

on 2/17/01 10:36 PM, Michael Andre-Driussi at mantis at sirius.com wrote:

On to the new topic: if we can agree that "Horn is a crutch," and I can readily go along with that, then suddenly I find myself asking "why?"

Good question. There are actually two questions: why does Horn's spirit go away, and why does it go away when it does? Both are mysteries. I can't help thinking it must have something to do with the "coincidences" that Horn is dying at the same time that Silk is either dying or attempting suicide, and that the Neighbor picks Silk's body to transfer Horn's spirit into.

The thought occurred to me that maybe in some non-literal sense Silk and Horn are the same person even before the spirit transfer, that Horn is the Silk who didn't run back after Hyacinth but followed the plan of Pas, as Mint put it (the twin-theme you mention again). I don't know if this makes any sense or not; I'm just throwing it out as possible food for thought.

--Adam

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