

Style (spoiler)

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 01 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1246>

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Adam Stephanides — 01 Mar 2001, 17:01

James Jordan wrote:

Someone brought up the fact that so many climactic events are off stage, and we only get hints of them. I can understand this as "Horn's" rambling style of memoir writing, devoid of a Nettle to edit him. But it seems that the children also write this way in their part of RTTW, and that's odd.

I've commented before on the unlikelihood of the children preserving the mystery of "Horn"'s identity until the end. Unlike Wolfe's narrative games in other works, I can't see that the children's authorship of the third-person sections is anything more than a device to increase Wolfe's mystification of "Horn"'s identity.

Also, the children's part of RTTW reflects the many times that Father talked about his experiences on the Whorl. Well, how long did Silkhorn hang around New Viron? I got the impression that he left right away, but maybe he stayed around for a year or so, and that's why the good-byes are not really needed. I guess it would have taken some time for the entourage to be collected....

Otoh, Horn would have had plenty of time to narrate his experiences on the Whorl to Hide and Hoof while they were travelling on Blue (and astral travelling), so there's no problem here.

--Adam

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

Michael Andre-Driussi — 01 Mar 2001, 18:21 · follows Adam Stephanides

Adam wrote:

I've commented before on the unlikelihood of the children preserving the mystery of "Horn"'s identity until the end. Unlike Wolfe's narrative games in other works, I can't see that the children's authorship of the third-person sections is anything more than a device to increase Wolfe's mystification of "Horn"'s identity.

I politely disagree in the most strenuous terms while still allowing for all the spectrum of personal readings.

The kick of all the Whorl stuff being written by people who have never actually been on the Whorl, and never are going to be on the Whorl . . . well. It is somewhat like having the fictional framing of "'A Story' by John V. Marsch" (an anthropological reconstruction/romance) eroded and put through the pretzel machine in the course of "V.R.T.," only much moreso. Because we read those Whorl chapters as being "true," "from the Narrator named Horn by his mother," "based upon firsthand experience," etc. Just as OBW and IGJ had been.

The poignancy of N meeting Horn's father; the intensity of the dark; the sacrifice of the eye; visits by "ghosts" from the beginning (Remora) to the end (Crane); N's sense of what any of it

means; all vppppt! Gone into a different plane. At first read perhaps we think "N is writing in third person during these sections because he is recreating through the action of writing how he was still struggling to get a grip on his personality/body issues." Nope. We might think, "Oh look, it says right here in the first few pages that the pockets of the robe were unfamiliar--that means he does not recall being Silk." Not exactly, but it does suggest what the writer(s) think about what happened (whether the writer[s] are consistant or not, etc.).

Here we were expecting to get to the "heart" of the matter, and we find that we are further away than when we started. Like in 5HC, where you think you've been on Ste. Anne, but you never have, you've always been on Ste. Croix.

The entire Whorl "half" of the book really =is= fan-fiction (aka fanfic). Literally and truly. (This is unarguable, right?) Again, this is another term (fanfic) which has been bandied about with regard to RTTW, in reaction to cases which may or may not be limited to the Whorl "half"; but yet again, here is a detail ("fanfic quality, nuance, or origin") to which I myself say, "That's not a =bug=, that's a =feature=."

Which, in turn, boils down to the simple case of "I like it" and "you don't."

I have here tried to explain my reading, to explain why I, personally, strongly object to Adam's statement of opinion, reiterated here again for clarity: "I can't see that the children's authorship of the third-person sections is anything more than a device to increase Wolfe's mystification of "Horn"'s identity."

Perhaps a flavor of discontent with RTTW can compare with the following case regarding URTH OF THE NEW SUN: some readers were expecting certain types of revelation, and when these things didn't materialize, they said things like, "URTH doesn't give anything that wasn't intimated before."

Likewise, it may be for RTTW and some readers.

This particular fanfic angle might also lead to some of the more tricky ("potentially destabilizing of a given reading") questions inspired by John Crowley's ENGINE SUMMER, since the same can be said of it in its entirety. To the same sort of reader disappointment/thwarting, etc.

=mantis=

Sirius Fiction

Catalog and errata sheet at <http://www.sirius.com/~mantis/>

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Alex David Groce — 01 Mar 2001, 22:44 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

<defense of the 3rd person sections of RttW snipped>

Very nice, mantis.

This particular fanfic angle might also lead to some of the more tricky ("potentially destabilizing of a given reading") questions inspired by John Crowley's ENGINE SUMMER, since the same can be said of it in its entirety. To the same sort of reader disappointment/thwarting, etc.

Ok, I'll bite. It's been a while since I read ENGINE SUMMER, but I'm about to reread it again. Which specific destabilizing questions are you talking about? (I can think of a couple of possibilities, but there may be more).

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

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