

RttW ending: when and who

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 31 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1309>

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Adam Stephanides — 31 Mar 2001, 09:53

An aeon ago (well, Feb. 9) Henry Kaiser asked:

How did they get the Whorl ready to leave so fast? Earlier, we were told by the surgeon on p. 331 that it [might] take "...years. A lifetime, likely as not." to ready for departure. It does not seem like it's more than a year or two later at the end of the narrative and it's already out of sight of the naked eye.

(I thought I remembered a reply, but couldn't find it in the archives.)

After rereading the ending, I think I know the answer. The Whorl doesn't leave so fast; the last two paragraphs are written many years after the rest of the book. The evidence is the words with which these paragraphs begin: "The faint, blinking star that old people call the _Whorl_ is fainter than ever." The implication of these words is that it is only "old people" who refer to it as the Whorl, and hence that all those who grew up on the Whorl are now old. But at the time the rest of the book is written, Horn is middle-aged, not old. (Hyacinth, who is older than Horn, is described as middle-aged (IGJ, 127).) Moreover, earlier in the Afterword, the editors refer to it simply as the Whorl. In all probability, at least two decades have passed between the writing of the rest of the book and the writing of the final two paragraphs; they were either added to a later edition of the book, or (more probably) written in by hand in a reader's copy.

Henry also asked:

What narrative voice is that at the end in the final two paragraphs? Is that Daisy writing the last two paragraphs or someone else?

Probably not Daisy. For one thing, if the final paragraphs were written long after Daisy's account of Silk's last bow, there's no reason why it should be Daisy. For another, the last paragraph refers to Seawrack as an "eerie young woman." But Daisy's description of Seawrack presents her as exotic and dangerous, but not eerie. And it may be just my imagination, but I think that Daisy's writing style is more matter-of-fact than that of the last two paragraphs.

And if they're not by Daisy, they're surely not by any of the other editors, who would have indicated their authorship. My hunch is that they're written by somebody who had never met the five passengers of the _Seanettle_, but knew of them only from the BotSS. (Or are there six passengers? Babbie is present at the meeting with Daisy, and if my theory is correct the writer of the last paragraph could have simply overlooked him when listing the passengers.)

--Adam

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