

The Return of Horn

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 09 Apr 2001

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maa32 — 09 Apr 2001, 23:02

Here's another theory.

Adam and Nutria said

But there are ways of indicating that the protagonist is both Horn and Silk without using amalgams like "Silkhorn." And while the editors' suppression of any name but "he" leaves the protagonist's identity ambiguous in retrospect, it doesn't read that way at the time. Since "Horn" protests that he is Horn throughout, and since the third-person sections give us (we think) access to "Horn's" mind which seemingly bears out his claim, we accept his claim at face value (at least I did). So the failure to identify the protagonist is deceptive in effect. And I have a hard time believing the editors wouldn't have recognized that and taken steps to correct it.

--Adam

though this has been discussed to death, you do bring another slant to it. Wolfe is more than capable of tricking us and reversing our expectations at the end of this trilogy. But are the editors of the 3d person sections? Why would they do this? As you note, such tricking makes little sense. I persist in suspecting that the Narrator is really mainly Horn, though in Silk's body, and that this is who he continues to be. But at this point, I'm reduced to little more than a suspicion, because of the effective way everyone here has beaten me up over this. And I'll bring this up again, since nobody commented on in when I brought it up the first time. I cannot find the place, but at one point the Narrator, having been accused of being Silk for the nth time, looks for a scar he expects to find on Silk's body, and claims not to find it, thereby reassuring himself that he is not Silk. Of course, it is pretty clear that he is in Silk's body, and is partly Silk; but he himself thinks he has reasons to dismiss the views of everyone around him.

Nutria the Nut

On the contrary, I think the editors do have a valid reason to say that in fact SILK returned instead of their father HORN in some unknown jokers' body. Their father is a failure without the return of silk, and the people (if we can assume the TBSS will serve for common propaganda like TBLS) will be more likely to live in peace if they thought Silk really did come back for them and found them wanting. They have something to strive for. If it was only Horn in a weird man's body (or worse, some inhuman impersonating a dead man he met on Green [who subsequently betrays the other inhuman and must be hunted down]), then he was a true failure. Children won't let their parents be failures if they can help it, especially if they are already semi-legendary. Why not lie in the sections they compose? Why not hide the true identity of the weirdo coming in, and lend credence to his claims. "Sure, he was our father. And he was Silk, too! What a true hero Horn was. He didn't fail us!" Even though Silk is conveniently gone.

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