

Roach on Mantis on Wombat on TBOTSS and fanfic

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 21 Jun 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1459>

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 21 Jun 2001, 16:33

Am I the only one who occasionally wonders if Horn had a brother named Hardart? I thought so.

Okay, Mantis: I think you've made your point with the little table, i.e., "it's all fiction here, what is it there." Which, of course, relates back to my discussion of "J. Random Bluvian's struggle to understand the facts of what happened in those early days of the colony."

Your description of the Laura Ingalls Wilder books & their continuations is excellent analogy, as far as it goes; the problem being that I don't think it adequately covers the situation. I would suggest that the idea of "a biography in novel form" would not occur to J. Random Bluvian (at least a JRB not too far removed in time from Silk, Horn, and Co.) ... the concept of "the novel" does not appear to be in their vocabulary. Made-up stories, yes. But I don't think the distinction between "fact" and "fiction" we make today, and which is constantly questioned by those pesky pomos, is a distinction inherent to our minds or the way we deal with texts. Writing a book about a real person or event and making up the details -- what's odd about that? Nothing; I suspect that the modern idea of fact in texts is really a product of the Lutheran revolt; Scriptural inerrancy was a natural and necessary concomitant of sola Scriptura, and has influenced the way we look at "non-fiction" texts in general (just as most of the techniques of modern literary criticism have evolved from Scriptural studies).

Scusi. I'm rambling a bit.

If you are going to argue that TBOTLS is, within its universe, strict BIOGRAPHY as opposed to BIOGRAPHY IN NOVEL FORM ("biography" is not the same as "fiction") then by all means, make your argument.

I'd far rather argue that there is no evidence that this distinction exists in (that corner of) the Lupiverse. The Neither Horn nor his sprats seem to think that there's anything odd or wrong with filling in the details as best they can; they don't particularly try to hide the fact that they've done it, and go to some effort to explain how they've gone about it. They don't seem to perceive the modernist absolute distinction between "fact" and "fiction"; rather, they see a continuity running from "this is true because I was there and saw it," to "I spoke to someone who was there," to "I heard about it from a friend" to "well, this is how it probably went down."

--The Blatt from the Id

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

Adam Stephanides — 22 Jun 2001, 21:27 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

on 6/21/01 6:33 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes at ddanehy at siebel.com wrote:
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[snip]

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I think the distinction between "strict biography" and "biography in novel form" does exist in the Lupiverse, although perhaps not in those precise terms. Evidence:

1) In Horn's "My Defense," at the end of TBOTLS, he says "Many of you [his critics] urge me to tell the story in my proper person, relating only what I saw, and in effect making myself the hero." Presumably his critics aren't saying they would find Horn's adventures more interesting than Silk's; they want him to confine himself to what he knows is true, not what he conjectures is true. And indeed, Horn spends much of the rest of his defense justifying his procedure in response to "criticisms and questions," implying that to his readers, if not to Horn himself, "making up the details" does require justification.

2) In RttW the editors, summarizing the townspeople's opinion, describe TBOTLS as "a chronicle, generally factual, of events prior to the founding of New Viron." (398) [*] So the editors are aware that the townspeople draw a distinction between a "factual" chronicle (presumably one which would confine itself to what its author knew about) and a "generally factual" one such as TBOTLS.

3) In their Afterword, the editors state "His Cognizance could not reveal the details of our protagonist's shiving; nor would we wish him to." (410) The only reason for them stating this here is to explain why they themselves did not describe Silk's shiving (and to put themselves one-up on Horn, who in TBOTLS described Auk's shiving, even though he had no account of it (see "My Defense")), which means that they themselves regard "making up the details" in the absence of evidence as undesirable.

If I'm right, why are the editors so vague about how they put together the main portion of their "re-creation"? The obvious answer is that if they went into more detail, it would be apparent how little of this re-creation was actually grounded in fact. And I would still argue that the editors wrote the third-person sections not just to fill in gaps in Narr's account. I believe that they had a specific agenda in mind. While I don't fully understand what it is, there's a clue in

their insistence that Narr gave up his search for Silk to give Pig his eye.

--Adam

[*] That's a joke, son (one of the rare examples of humor in TBOTSS). To the New Vironese, TBOTLS isn't the story of "the greatest and most extraordinary man" Horn ever knew, or the story of Silk's realization that the Outsider is the only God worthy of the name, or the story of how the Plan of Pas was fulfilled. No, it's the prelude to the founding of New Viron.

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