

# The Narrator's mistakes

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 21 Jun 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1461>

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Adam Stephanides — 21 Jun 2001, 23:24

While thumbing through RttW, I came across a passage in which Narr notes he has made a mistake, but says he won't correct it, for various reasons, concluding, "No, there really are such things as honest mistakes; this account is full of them, and I intend to leave it that way." (184) This passage raises several interesting points.

1) In correcting Narr's "obvious errors," the editors are going against Narr's own policy.

2) Narr says that "I cannot correct all or even most of them [his mistakes] without tearing the whole account to shreds and starting again." If Narr is not just being humble, his original manuscript had a lot of mistakes. We may wonder how many of them the editors caught (there's no reason to think they were in a position to recognize all the mistakes) and how many of them the editors missed and we are also unable to catch.

3) Narr goes on to say "My new account, moreover, would be bound to be worse than this, since I could not prevent myself from attributing to myself knowledge and opinions I did not have at the time the events I recorded occurred." But of course, everything in his original account dealing with Horn's experiences in his own body was written down after a similar or greater delay.

We've already lost the third-person sections of RttW as a reliable source; it appears that Narr's manuscript is not as solid as it seems.

One other point about this passage: Narr's statement that "there really are such things as honest mistakes." It's odd that Narr should throw this in, because nowhere in the preceding paragraph (or anywhere else that I can recall) is it suggested that there aren't. Does this remark reflect Narr's subconscious awareness that his entire account is based upon a "dishonest mistake," that he is fully Horn?

--Adam

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

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Michael Straight — 22 Jun 2001, 09:16 · follows Adam Stephanides

On Thu, 21 Jun 2001, Adam Stephanides wrote:

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The fact that he felt like he would need to tear up the whole account made me think he was referring more to the way things were written, the things he focused on, the things he left out,

than specific "factual" errors.

"Mistake" is a broader word, encompassing, "I should have started telling about this, skipped that, gone into detail about this other, and done a better job of explaining these things." He's not necessarily saying that there are lots of false statements.

-Rostrum

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Adam Stephanides — 22 Jun 2001, 15:06 · follows Michael Straight

on 6/22/01 8:16 AM, Michael Straight at straight at email.unc.edu wrote:  
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Narr begins the paragraph by saying that he has confused Seawrack's ring with Oreb's. He goes on to say "I should go back and line out my mistake, I suppose, but I hate lining things out--it gives the page such an ugly appearance. Besides, to line out is to accept responsibility for the correctness of all that is let stand. To correct that or any other error would be to invite you to ask me (when you read this, as I hope you soon will) why I failed to correct some other." (184) He goes on with the sentence I quoted above. It seems to me that he is indeed talking about specific factual errors.

--Adam

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 22 Jun 2001, 15:08 · follows Adam Stephanides

Subject: Re: (whorl) The Narrator's mistakes

What's next?

"More of the Narrator's Greatest Mistakes"

"Well, That About Wraps It Up for the Narrator"

--Oolon Cobblatid

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