

Scylla and Wolfe's "side by side" style

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maa32 — 03 Aug 2001, 18:43

Since someone mentioned Wolfe's foreshadowing of Scylla as Oreb again, I just wanted to point out that Wolfe always places two seemingly unrelated things together, side by side in the text, often dozens of times, without drawing explicit links. Kind of like how everytime a weird creature in *The Book of the New Sun* shows up hunting Severian, Hethor reappears immediately afterwards. Wolfe did the same thing throughout most of *In Green's Jungles* and *Return to the Whorl*. Almost everytime the narrator dreams of Scylla or thinks of her, Oreb flaps in or makes a noise or draws attention to himself. I noticed this because I had read most of the spoilers for *Green* and *Return to the Whorl* on this list before I read them and decided to pay attention every time Scylla came up. Much as most of the stories related in *Peace* involve ghosts and dead people, when strung together the parallel structure casts light on the primary narrative. Anytime something is repeatedly mentioned side by side in Wolfe, I think it is intentional (and the most predictable aspect of his style). He doesn't draw immediate connections but the placement in the text insinuates a whole lot. Which leaves me curious as to the strange narrative jumps throughout the short sun books ... how connected is the narrative? Can we determine what makes the narrator skip from topic to topic?

Another interesting thing I noticed, which I think is very very strange, is that the narrator does not directly narrate anything that happened to his present body before the incidental beginning of narration in *On Blue's Waters*.

In other words, everything the narrator remembers did not happen to his body.

When he gets to his present body, the editors tell the story. If we accept that Silk is the narrator, he only narrates what he was not present to experience (except for his "present" journey from being Rajan to arriving at Horn's home, during which time he was actively composing his manuscript). There's just something weird and deliberate about what he narrates in detail.

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