

First impressions of IGJ (possible spoilers)

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 23 Jul 2000

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William Ansley — 23 Jul 2000, 23:40

Well, I finished In Green's Jungles today. Wolfe is certainly is full of surprises. All I can say is that I hope Return to the Whorl is released with no more of a delay than there was between OBW and IGJ. It is really very difficult to make any judgement about the first two volumes in the absence of the third. Not to mention the fact that I'll have to read IGJ again before I will feel competent to make too many definitive statements about it.

At 11:17 AM -0700 7/15/00, Adam Stephanides wrote:

4. I found it harder to follow the story here than in OBW. This is partly because the plot is more complicated, partly because there is no strong narrative thread like Horn's quest for Pajarocu in OBW, and partly for another reason which I'm afraid it might give too much away to reveal.

Interesting. I found it easier to follow IGJ than OBW. It seemed to me that the second volume was considerably less fragmentary than the first.

At 2:37 AM +0000 7/21/00, Christopher Culver wrote:

3) Horn tends to sound in several places like Alden Dennis Weer. I wonder if this is just because people who have died tend to think like this in Wolfe's mind, or Wolfe is simply reusing a previous mode of narration.

I think that Weer is Wolfe's "default voice." In my opinion, virtually all of Wolfe's first person protagonists "sound like" Weer at one time or another, if they are allowed to talk long enough.

At 11:19 PM -0700 7/22/00, Dan Rabin wrote:

It seems pretty daring to me that Wolfe builds up to the recognition scene between Horn/Silk and Auk and Chenille, and then yells "Cut!", only confirming our suspicions in the conversation afterwards back on Blue.

This doesn't seem daring to me at all, for Wolfe. "It's what he does. It's all he does!" Wolfe's preferred method for dealing with pivotal scenes is to leave them out and then refer to them later briefly and fragmentarily.

At 10:29 AM -0700 7/23/00, Adam Stephanides wrote:

Now that we know how Horn got into Silk's body (assuming it is Silk's) the question I asked about IGJ remains: why doesn't Horn know he's in Silk's body? Why doesn't he recognize whose body is in the grave (assuming it's the obvious person, whose name I'm hiding from accidental readers of this post)? Even if he doesn't recognize Silk's body, didn't he meet anyone on the Whorl who addressed him as Silk? Of course, maybe he does know he's in Silk's body, and is hiding the fact from his readers (while leaving obvious clues). But then why was he continuing the search for Silk at the start of OBW?

I agree with Adam here completely. This is a real sticking point for me and I hope Wolfe resolves it satisfactorily. It seems very

unlikely that the body Horn's spirit is put into is Silk, judging from the description in the text.

But, if not, how does Horn get into Silk's body before he is shanghaied into becoming the Rajan of Gaon (if he actually inhabits Silk's body at all). Does he continue body hopping in *_Return to the Whorl_*?

The Horn of OBW resembles the non-apotheosized Severian: someone who feels strongly, suffers greatly, and is very human, to the point of being unsympathetic. The Horn of IGJ is much more like Silk in more than a physical sense; he's clearly a good man, and a dispenser of wisdom and good counsel, while humbly insisting all the time that he is no such thing. I have to admit that as a protagonist I prefer the first model to the second.

I agree that the Horn that narrates OBW seems to be significantly different from the Horn that narrates IGJ. This makes me wonder what happened to cause the change. It seems to me that it may have something to do with the very odd section towards the very end of OBW where Horn's identity seems to become confused with Babbie's and Horn meets the little boy and girl who are named Brother and Sister. I readily admit that I didn't understand the section of OBW at all and that I am disappointed that it wasn't explicated at all in IGJ.

William Ansley

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