

narrative viewpoint in Long Sun

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 06 Dec 1996

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/9>

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Peter Cash — 06 Dec 1996, 14:44

One thing I found really frustrating with the end of Exodus was the revelation that this has been Horn's narrative all along. This revelation came as a complete surprise to me, and I couldn't help but feel that it was a trick Wolfe sprung so that he could end the Book of the Long Sun when he did. After all, if he narrows down the narrator's perspective, then he can't be blamed for not filling us in on details like what became of Silk--Horn just doesn't know.

I feel that writer really ought to drop some clues ahead of time about this sort of thing. Did any of you notice any clues about Horn's role in the earlier books?

Peter

~~~~~  
Die Welt ist alles, was Zerfall ist.  
(apologies to Ludwig Wittgenstein)  
~~~~~

Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com

David Adrian — 19 Dec 1996, 10:39 · follows Peter Cash

From: Peter Cash <cash at convex.convex.com>
Subject: (whorl) narrative viewpoint in Long Sun
Date: Fri, 06 Dec 1996 14:44:22

[Posted from Whorl, the mailing list for Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun]

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I don't have the book with me so I can't give you a page number, but Horn did give himself away earlier in Exodus. Go back to the meeting where Silk agreed to surrender to Potto, just before he was captured. The line is something like "Then I walked in."

Nice little shock there. It definitely put a different edge on the near-suicide scenes on the airship. I'm not sure whether I'm playing tricks on myself or not (I'll have to read it again, and I can't wait), but it seemed that that Silk's talk with Horn had a unique tone to it. A bit more depth, a little more confidence behind it than most of the others, which Horn had to recreate from guesswork, instinct, and what witnesses survived the end of the Whorl.

--adrian

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Doug Eigsti — 20 Dec 1996, 06:33 · follows David Adrian

From: Peter Cash <cash at convex.convex.com>

Subject: (whorl) narrative viewpoint in Long Sun

Date: Fri, 06 Dec 1996 14:44:22

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Peter,

I have yet to find Horn giving his narration away but it is notable that Horn is mentioned in the first paragraph of NIGHTSIDE. The only other characters there are Silk and the strange doppelgangers Marble and Rose. Wolfe is notorious for leaving only one clue to a mystery to be revealed later. The relationship between Marble and Rose does not

surface again in the story until much later. Wolfe does nothing beyond that first paragraph to encourage the reader to connect these two characters until one has forgotten all, only to be reminded by the Torturer himself. Don't say I never told you...

I have heard this called the Loop-the-Lupine school of writing.

Of which Wolfe is the founder and chief practitioner. Wolfe does not like to insult the reader by giving multiple clues. The reader either learns to love it or stops reading Wolfe. His books are written for multiple readings, for the reader we will be ten years from now. Each time through one of his books leaves me with a unique feeling of, as Steve Martin would say, "vu-ja-de", that I've never done this before. I know the frustration of missing key clues on the first pass, but I also know the joy of reading a Wolfe novel for the "first time" on the second iteration.

=Doug=

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