

Silkicide

The Urth list — 7 messages, 5 voices, 11 Jul 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3342>

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Jason Ingram — 11 Jul 2002, 20:08

I read Silk's wounds as being self-inflicted; but it seems to me that an actual suicide attempt by Silk would have been successful. I felt that he gashed himself in some sort of mourning frenzy, which was consistent with a substantial self-destructive urge and the loss of a will to live.

At one point the narrator remembers (or is reported to have remembered) that, shortly after his transfer to the whorl, he felt a sort of horror for a knife that he was holding and cast it away. I interpreted this emotion as circumstantial evidence that the knife had been used against Silk.

Sepia

On Thursday, July 11, 2002, at 09:17 AM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:
Stephen Case: you have presented the best & most coherent argument for the "Silk commits suicide theory" I have ever encountered -- others may have expressed it before, but if they did it well enough for me to understand, I must have missed it (which is quite possible; I skim a lot of email when I'm busy).

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 11 Jul 2002, 22:01 · follows Jason Ingram

He-who-must-forever-be-in-Kansas writes:

At one point the narrator remembers (or is reported to have remembered) that, shortly after his transfer to the whorl, he felt a sort of horror for a knife that he was holding and cast it away. I interpreted this emotion as circumstantial evidence that the knife had been used against Silk.

Yes; I reread that passage last night. I don't think there is any real doubt that his arm wounds are self-inflicted; the only serious question is whether they are mourning gashes, as we know to be practiced in Viron, or an attempt at self- slaughter.

In favor of suicide is the observation that some of the wounds are quite deep; against it is the very word "some -- it implies a frenzied hacking and not a concerted attempt to sever the arteries.

I'm not sure whether we can know whether Silk was attempting suicide; I'm watching for any further clues as I read.

Also of note: throughout his parts of the text, beginning in OBW, the Narrator makes occasional slips of the tongue and pen which indicate the presence of the Silk persona -- for example, referring to his sons, Hide and Horn; or talking about Nettle but using the word "Hyacinth." Anyway, the point here is that he begins to make these slips almost immediately after the transference of the Horn persona to the Silk body.

... unfortunately, this being the "reconstructed from his words" part written by the "redactors," we can't know if they are reporting what he has actually said or inserting them for "consistency." There are places in the main narrative when he is recording his own conversations and reports such slips with no comment, and so one might suppose that he reported similarly when talking to the kids about what happened on the _Whorl_; contrariwise, one might suppose that, in reconstructing the events on the _Whorl_ from (there memories of) his comments on them, they inserted such slips so as to be consistent with the primary narrative. Indeed, if one wants to be paranoid enough about it, one can even suppose that they inserted _all_ such slips, because the Narrator (striving to preserve his belief in himself as Horn) would certainly not have kept them.

All of which, again, brings me to something I said months ago: that one of the glories and annoyances of the "Short Sun" books is that our attempts to get from them to "what actually happened" is not a bad analogy to attempts to tease out the "historical Jesus" or the "authentic kerygma" from the received Gospels...

John Barleycorn must die

Jason Ingram — 12 Jul 2002, 00:49 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Blattid, I don't think I'm in Kansas anymore . . .

Blattid wrote:

Yes; I reread that passage last night. I don't think there is any real doubt that his arm wounds are self-inflicted; the only serious question is whether they are mourning gashes, as we know to be practiced in Viron, or an attempt at self-slaughter.

[...]

I'm not sure whether we _can_ know whether Silk was attempting suicide; I'm watching for any further clues as I read.

I agree that the evidence is ambiguous. I read the wounds as self-inflicted, amounting to more than ritual gashes but less than an intentional suicide attempt. I half agree with Nutria, who writes:

"It seems to me that Silk's throwing away a knife might be a knife he used in a vain attempt to ward off attackers, not one he used to inflict wounds on himself. The Neighbor says Silk's body is okay. It seems to me that if he had been trying for suicide, he would have succeeded. But I may be wrong."

An excess of emotion might have led Silk to harm himself. One possibility I wanted to check when I re-read is whether Pig might have been involved in hyacinth's death. Other than that I'm not sure who the attackers would have been. Is there textual evidence?

Regarding the slips of self-naming mentioned: when I was scanning through some of the books (incidentally, looking for textual evidence that Silk gave blood to inhum). I was unable to find anything convincing--he offers some to Krait as the latter is dying--IGJ p. 81 Tor hardcover-- and wishes he had thought to give some to Jahlee to awaken her. However, my search didn't amount to a perusal) I came across a passage where the narrator notices that he had made a mistake, and talks about why he didn't correct it. I was also led to think that the narrator would be worried about others reading his journal, which might go far to account for Wolfe's intentional indirection. The passage that triggered that thought was one where the narrator

writes that he won't say where he hid his Azoth . . . I'll see if I can locate the precise passages again should there be interest.

Sepia

Andy Robertson — 13 Jul 2002, 05:24 · follows Jason Ingram

----- Original Message -----

From: "Jason Ingram" <j_ingram at mac.com>

Yes; I reread that passage last night. I don't think there is any real doubt that his arm wounds are self-inflicted; the only serious question is whether they are mourning gashes, as we know to be practiced in Viron, or an attempt at self-slaughter.

Having read this passage several times, I believe that Wolfe meant the ambiguity and that it therefore cannot be resolved by us.

One point, however, is that Silk is a practiced butcher and if he meant to kill himself would have probably done so easily and efficiently.

hartshorn

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 12 Jul 2002, 15:41 · follows Andy Robertson

He-who-adds-tone-to-this-list writes:

Blattid, I don't think I'm in Kansas anymore . . .

Sorry, I had that backwards. Kansas is in sepia.

[...]

An excess of emotion might have led Silk to harm himself. One possibility I wanted to check when I re-read is whether Pig might have been involved in hyacinth's death. Other than that I'm not sure who the attackers would have been. Is there textual evidence?

Pig mentions that he went to Silk's place and didn't find him there. I regard this as evidence that he didn't kill Hyacinth

-- and besides, I don't think his rider would have permitted it.

If one wanted to say someone had killed Hyacinth, one could suppose it was the Gaonese led by Hari Mau, who came out to Endroad looking for Silk and didn't find him; however, I would be inclined to suspect that they didn't find him because they arrived after Horn's spirit entered Silk's body and the newly formed Narrator left the building. At this point, I think Hyacinth just died, and Silk gashes himself in grief.

Michael Andre-Driussi — 12 Jul 2002, 23:28 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

While we have pondered "did he or didn't he?" over years past, and will do so into the future, still I think we can all agree that it is ambiguous.

Likewise I'm reasonably sure that we can all agree that we are in the bleachers of the arena, and the referees made the call: they said the words (talk of combining two persons), they backed it up with actions (taking out the non-corporeal parts of Silk aged 40-something;

transferring in Horn's non-corporeal parts; the download from Mainframe of Silk-23 later on may have been their doing or not, if it happened, that is).

The umpires made their call. This is not ambiguous.

=mantis=

William Ansley — 13 Jul 2002, 01:08 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

At 4:28 PM -0700 7/12/02, Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

While we have pondered "did he or didn't he?" over years past, and will do so into the future, still I think we can all agree that it is ambiguous.

So far I'm with you, yes.

Likewise I'm reasonably sure that we can all agree that we are in the bleachers of the arena, and the referees made the call: they said the words (talk of combining two persons), they backed it up with actions (taking out the non-corporeal parts of Silk aged 40-something; transferring in Horn's non-corporeal parts; the download from Mainframe of Silk-23 later on may have been their doing or not, if it happened, that is).

The umpires made their call. This is not ambiguous.

Now you've lost me. Who are the referees/umpires? And why Silk-*23*? I don't mean to be irritating, but I could use some clarification.

William Ansley

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