

Two Silk questions

The Urth list — 17 messages, 9 voices, 14 Jul 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3350>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Andrew Bollen — 14 Jul 2002, 01:05

Two questions which bug me about Silk, and for which I don't see any clear answers or developed theories in the archives:

(1) His "other" parents. At some point Silk has a vision which includes two sets of parents (memory hazy on details). We know who his "host" parents are; what about the others? Is there anything which gives us a hint?

(2) In a response to questions a while back, Wolfe says that Silk, in some broad sense, is a member of the guild of torturers (under whatever their official name is). Also, there is some kind of hint to the effect that Silk makes some kind of appearance in the events of the Book of the New Sun. How are these rather gnomish intimations to be interpreted?

Tks! -AB

Charles Reed — 15 Jul 2002, 15:07 · follows Andrew Bollen

Andrew Bollen wrote:

Two questions which bug me about Silk, and for which I don't see any clear answers or developed theories in the archives: (1) His "other" parents. At some point Silk has a vision which includes two sets of parents (memory hazy on details). We know who his "host" parents are; what about the others? Is there anything which gives us a hint?

Since his "other" parents -- being the ones biologically responsible for at least most of his DNA -- would have lived or at least had viable DNA during Typhon's reign (300+ years ago Whorl-time-frame, 1000-2000+ years ago Urth-time-frame) I'd have to conclude that there's no indication who those people were unless they are members of the "royal family." We just don't know of any other people from era that I'm aware of. It's actually pretty intriguing to think of Silk as a son of Typhon, but I'm not sure there's any textual evidence to support such an idea.

(2) In a response to questions a while back, Wolfe says that Silk, in some broad sense, is a member of the guild of torturers (under whatever their official name is). Also, there is some kind of hint to the effect that Silk makes some kind of appearance in the events of the Book of the New Sun. How are these rather gnomish intimations to be interpreted?

See <http://urth.net/whorl/archives/v0006/0350.shtml> for the exact question and response.

I believe that when GW identified Silk "in the broadest possible sense" as a "member (current, former, or future) of the Order of Seekers for Truth and Penitence" that he is simply saying that Silk is a true seeker of truth and penitence. Nothing more.

And there's not really any interpretation necessary to the appearance of Silk/Horn in the Book of the New Sun. Have you finished RETURN TO THE WHORL yet? If not, then I don't want to spoil anything by telling you about it.

Charles

James Jordan — 15 Jul 2002, 15:59 · follows Charles Reed

At 09:05 AM 7/14/2002 +0800, you wrote:

Two questions which bug me about Silk, and for which I don't see any clear answers or developed theories in the archives:

(1) His "other" parents. At some point Silk has a vision which includes two sets of parents (memory hazy on details). We know who his "host" parents are; what about the others? Is there anything which gives us a hint?

Silk is dead at the time, buried and not breathing for 30 minutes. The other couple are his biological parents. He meets them in the afterlife, before being sent back.

(2) In a response to questions a while back, Wolfe says that Silk, in some broad sense, is a member of the guild of torturers (under whatever their official name is). Also, there is some kind of hint to the effect that Silk makes some kind of appearance in the events of the Book of the New Sun. How are these rather gnomish intimations to be interpreted?

You have not finished reading the Short Sun books, so we won't tell you about whether or not Silk appears in the Severian books. The precise name of the torturer's guild is the Order of Seekers of Truth and Penitence, a name that would fit Silk and the Church as well. Wolfe probably means more than that, possibly that as the State tortures (executes) criminals themselves, Silk as the Church slaughters animals as substitutes for human criminality (and in the Christian eucharist, re-presents the slaughter of Christ for human criminality).

Nutria

matthew.malthouse — 15 Jul 2002, 16:36 · follows James Jordan

On 15/07/2002 16:59:22 James Jordan wrote:

Silk is dead at the time,

For tax reasons?

M

Michael Andre-Driussi — 15 Jul 2002, 17:27 · follows matthew.malthouse

Andrew Bollen asked about:

Two questions which bug me about Silk, and for which I don't see any clear answers or developed theories in the archives: (1) His "other" parents. At some point Silk has a vision which includes two sets of parents (memory hazy on details). We know who his "host" parents are; what about the others? Is there anything which gives us a hint?

As the others have already answered, the others are presumed to be his biological parents. Now, as to the rest of the same question: who are they, themselves. It is tricky, since we understand Silk was a frozen embryo. IIRC, just about the only thing we know about the biological parents is that both are blond, which goes along well with Silk being blond. To further complicate things, the embryo was probably genetically altered, given various enhancements (i.e., the embryo is not strictly natural).

Beyond this iirc there are suggestions made to Silk that are definitely meant to be manipulative of him, and whether they contain a grain of truth or are entirely true remains open to speculation and interpretation. IIRC, I had the impression that Kypris and Pas (both blond) were the biological parents, or wanted him to believe that (the secret love child of the adulterous affair); which raises an interesting problem, because clearly the two blonds he saw were not

gods. I would've sworn all this was covered here before, but I guess not: So I privately entertained the idea that maybe the ones he saw were the un-deified versions of Kypris and Pas, the raw, unenhanced scans of two mundane people (hmmm, and I guess that would have to have happened before Typhon got the second head?) in Mainframe. Or maybe the difference between fake-heaven Mainframe and real heaven (real heaven would not have Typhon with two heads)--and Silk has seen them in real heaven? (Which would add something to Silk's dampened enthusiasm at the airship's Mainframe visit.)

OTOH, the hypothetical claim to being parents of Silk could also be traced to the genetic engineering: Kypris and Pas drew up the blueprint of modifications to an embryo created from two blond mundanes.

=mantis=

James Jordan — 15 Jul 2002, 18:02 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Pas is not yet dead when Silk sees his dead biological parents in the Outsider's "Mainframe," so he cannot be Silk's father. I think the blondness of Pas and Kypris is a thematic parallel, or a red herring, or both.

You might be right that they chose Silk because of blond parents (how common would such be in South America?). Yet, given how the embryos have been ruined, how could they know when he would be born, or that he would be born before landfall? Not possible to plan this, I think. The selection of Silk's embryo for birth is part of the Outsider's plan, not Pas's. Thus, I think it is a literary coincidence.

Nutria

Michael Straight — 15 Jul 2002, 17:59 · follows James Jordan

On Mon, 15 Jul 2002, Charles Reed wrote:
I believe that when GW identified Silk "in the broadest possible sense" as a "member (current, former, or future) of the Order of Seekers for Truth and Penitence" that he is simply saying that Silk is a true seeker of truth and penitence. Nothing more.

Also, Severian tortures others for their sins. Silk tortures himself for his sins.

-Rostrum

Michael Straight — 15 Jul 2002, 18:05 · follows Michael Straight

On Mon, 15 Jul 2002, James Jordan wrote:
Pas is not yet dead when Silk sees his dead biological parents in the Outsider's "Mainframe," so he cannot be Silk's father. I think the blondness of Pas and Kypris is a thematic parallel, or a red herring, or both.

"Pas" has no genes from which to make Silk. Typhon did (skin cells from his head, or germ cells frozen from his original body). And Typhon is dead by Silk's time. Silk might be an embryo engineered from the genes of Typhon and <whatever Kypris's real name was>.

The harder bit to swallow is that Silk's spirit would go to the same place as Typhon's when he died.

-Rostrum

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 15 Jul 2002, 18:08 · follows Michael Straight

Rostrum sez:

"Pas" has no genes from which to make Silk. Typhon did (skin cells from his head, or germ cells frozen from his original body). And Typhon is dead by Silk's time.

Well, no ... he's in suspended animation on Mount Typhon.

Josh Geller — 15 Jul 2002, 18:25 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Mon, 15 Jul 2002, James Jordan wrote:

Pas is not yet dead when Silk sees his dead biological parents in the Outsider's "Mainframe," so he cannot be Silk's father. I think the blondness of Pas and Kypris is a thematic parallel, or a red herring, or both. You might be right that they chose Silk because of blond parents (how common would such be in South America?).

It is extremely common in southern South America, especially Argentina.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 15 Jul 2002, 18:27 · follows Josh Geller

Just about 2/3 through RttW and (to resolve some doubts others have expressed) there is a clear statement by a Neighbor that they (a) travelled to the _Whorl when it arrived in the Bleen system, and (b) "we infected you with inhum." "

Michael Straight — 15 Jul 2002, 18:29 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Mon, 15 Jul 2002, Josh Geller wrote:

You might be right that they chose Silk because of blond parents (how common would such be in South America?).

It is extremely common in southern South America, especially Argentina.

Yeah, but how common are destriers in South America? The real question is how rare blonds were in the Commonwealth in Typhon's time.

-Rostrum

Michael Straight — 15 Jul 2002, 18:31 · follows Michael Straight

On Mon, 15 Jul 2002, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

Just about 2/3 through RttW and (to resolve some doubts others have expressed) there is a clear statement by a Neighbor that they (a) travelled to the _Whorl when it arrived in the Bleen system, and (b) "we infected you with inhum." "

Is it too late to lobby for calling it the Grue System, in honor of Dave Lebling's presence on the list?

-Rostrum

Andy Robertson — 16 Jul 2002, 08:24 · follows Michael Straight

e

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

From: "Michael Straight" <straight at email.unc.edu>
To: <urth at urth.net>

It is extremely common in southern South America, especially Argentina.

Yeah, but how common are destriers in South America? The real question is how rare blonds were in the Commonwealth in Typhon's time.

They are common, Dorcas' extreme blondness is not remarked upon.

I never really understood this point. Isn't there somewhere in the BOTNS where Severian says that it is known that each continent has a pattern for humanity, and that if people move from one land to another they will change to fit it?

If so, how come there are European looking people in South America (or for that matter, North America?)

hartshorn

Michael Straight — 15 Jul 2002, 18:43 · follows Andy Robertson

On Tue, 16 Jul 2002, Andy Robertson wrote:

I never really understood this point. Isn't there somewhere in the BOTNS where Severian says that it is known that each continent has a pattern for humanity, and that if people move from one land to another they will change to fit it?

If so, how come there are European looking people in South America (or for that matter, North America?)

The climate has changed quite a bit, what with the Sun getting dimmer, so South America is probably a lot more habitable for fair-skinned, light-eyed folks.

Michael Andre-Driussi — 15 Jul 2002, 18:43 · follows Michael Straight

Nutria wrote:

Pas is not yet dead when Silk sees his dead biological parents in the Outsider's "Mainframe," so he cannot be Silk's father.

Ah, but we are talking =biological= life here, not VR life in Mainframe. And I'm sure you will agree that Typhon, the biological pre-form of Pas, is long dead by the time of Silk; as is Typhon's extramarital girlfriend.

(I mean, as far as a =spiritual= father for Silk, obviously that would be Patera Pike, but he does not show up in the four parents. The biological parents are shown and the foster mother who bore him and raised him, and the calde' who she loved.)

The stretch is that the original scans (Typhon and bimbo) become the first mundane inhabitants of Mainframe, which then becomes more populated as generations die and are uploaded.

Maybe it is the contrast between real heaven and Mainframe.

I think the

blondness of Pas and Kypris is a thematic parallel, or a red herring, or both.

You might be right that they chose Silk because of blond parents

(how common would such be in South America?). Yet, given how the embryos

have been ruined, how could they know when he would be born, or that he would be born before landfall? Not possible to plan this, I think. The selection of Silk's embryo for birth is part of the Outsider's plan, not Pas's.

Thus, I think it is a literary coincidence.

Sure, that is valid.

But what I'm talking about has nothing to do with "how could they know when he would be born." It has everything to do with genetic identification, like a remote DNA test or whatever. A genetic fingerprint that can be detected. Through Mainframe, Silk is known at a level deeper than surface features; it seems likely to me that his genetic enhancements raise cryptic flags that at least conspirator gods (i.e., Pas and Kypris) can see, if not flags that all gods can see.

Mainframe, I contend, is not just a bunch of timetables and birth announcements, with every little ant-like person being tracked from cradle to grave. Mainframe has more to it than just matching up a face to a driver's license photo or auger's certificate to determine identity.

At the more pedestrian level, I'm saying that when a person dies and goes to Mainframe (which seems to have VR ghosts of real people), the entity in Mainframe is a scan that was taken of the living person: this scan is held in limbo until the death of the person and then it is released into the Mainframe visiting lounge or Mainframe proper. Ideally perhaps the scan would be taken at the moment of dying, but how often this could happen (one needs to be facing a working monitor, after all) remains vague.

The old calde' talked Silk's surrogate mother into carrying the frozen embryo to term; the child is born, as a man he is recognized by Kypris, and things begin to happen. In retrospect, if we believe that Silk was an engineered creature built to Pas's secret specifications, as I think most of us do, then he is just another hidden tool, like a cane-sword, for Pas to use should the need arise. The shocking thing would be if cunning Pas had only made =one= such tool, and there are plenty of hints that he made many, and hints that the other gods and goddesses had their own secret projects as well. Tools that are squirreled away in the woodwork, just in case they might be needed. Plus we know that there was a lot of family tension, on the Whorl and in the biological pre-forms left back on Urth, leading to big rebellion.

=mantis=

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 15 Jul 2002, 18:52 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

I never really understood this point. Isn't there somewhere in the BOTNS where Severian says that it is known that each continent has a pattern for humanity, and that if people move from one land to another they will change to fit it?

I know it's somewhere, but it might actually be in "Castle of the Otter" in Wolfe's own voice, so to speak.

If so, how come there are European looking people in South America (or for that matter, North America?)

Because he also says it takes a long time (I think O(100) generation) to accomplish this.