

Some Scattered Thoughts: some short, one very long.

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 15 Jul 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3352>

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 15 Jul 2002, 18:53

1. Silk's relationship with Hyacinth. This simply cannot be understood outside of the context of the (very short) book of the prophet Hosea in the Bible. To summarize thematically: Hosea, at God's command, marries a whore and repeatedly forgives her straying; this is intended as a metaphor for God's relationship with Israel (and, in Christian understanding, also for Christ's relationship with the Church).

2. Can someone explain to me why people have trouble believing that Silk might have gashed his arms in grief? Not only is this clearly established as a grieving practice in Viron (see, for example, Orpine's funeral); it is a well established historically as a practice in the "real" world. And, as Nutria so succinctly put it, "I don't think this skilled auger tried to kill himself and failed."

3. Regarding the identity of Silk and/or his parents ... I wonder if they might not be Typhon's parents; that is, whether Silk might in fact be a clone taken from Typhon's own cells? Consider Typhon's concern for the "face of command" which drives him to the whole-head transplant, with all its inconveniences, he chooses over a simple brain transplant. Is it possible, or even likely, that Typhon's own success is due to the "leader" geneplex which marks Silk out? Might not Typhon have wanted his own "face of command" back when he became incarnate again at the starcrosser's arrival? And would a "better" person grown from the same biogenetic substrate not be the ideal persona to blend with the dead-alive Pas, to bring him back to full life in Mainframe? This is just a hunch, but it seems worth exploring.

(Later: Just saw Mantis' suggestion that they might be the mortal versions of Kypris and Pas. Interesting ... and it would also provide a way of conveying Pas's geneplex for leadership to his next body.)

4. (This is the very long one.)

No, Nutria, there is not -- at this point, anyway -- a consensus that Horn is moved into Babbie at the end of OBW. There is some evidence that he is moved (or copied) to Babbie, possibly/probably at that point, but no certainty by any means, and strong evidence that the Horn persona is still present e.g. when Hide recognizes his father in the Narrator during his (Hide's) first astral trip to Green.

I'm beginning to think I see a way out of this maze, but it's kind of complicated.

What is moved from Horn's body to Silk's? Is it his "soul"? His "spirit" (which is spoken of several times through the course of the Books)? A "memory stream," as someone put it recently? A "personality"? Or ...

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One of the great problems facing any serious soulist today is the increasingly clear evidence of how much of memory and behavior is organic in behavior.

Suppose George takes a blow to the head and loses all his memory; when he regains consciousness, he is in essence a new person, and the personality he exhibits is quite different. Now, is there a new soul inhabiting or animating this body? Or is the "soul" something quite different from (conscious) memory and (the external manifestations of) personality? This is important to any soulist -- such as Wolfe, or myself -- trying to understand just what this "immortal part" _is_.

Consider, similarly, someone who suffers a less extreme cranial trauma. He retains all memory, but is drastically changed -- there are cases of a "normal" person becoming antisocial, even vicious, after a head blow. This is extremely problematic for the soulist: if physical trauma can cause a person to become thus loveless and (at least outwardly) sinful, is the soul thereby damned, though there is no free choice? A radical Calvinist _might_ have no problem with this; most other Christians are made a bit more uncomfortable when the problem is stated thus baldly.

Taking this as a starting place, we can begin to see the Books (all three of them) as, in part at least, an exploration of what these various things -- soul, spirit, memory, personality -- are and how they relate.

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In tBotNS, the most conspicuous explorations of these questions are the various memory-transfers using the analeptic alzabo; the alzabo itself; and Jonas.

In the general use of the analeptic alzabo, memories and nothing more seem to be transferred to the eater from the eaten.

In the special case of Severian and Thecla, it _appears_ that he (who has shown a propensity for resurrecting the dead) actually brings her soul or spirit or whatever to codwell in his body; however, this may be no more than an appearance: it may simply be that he (who also has a particularly strong capacity for memory) is an unusually fit receptacle for memory. Yet, once or twice, he speaks in Thecla's persona, and once or twice, someone sees a woman "with" him who seems to be Thecla. So that's ambiguous, at least for now.

The alzabo itself seems to be better "adapted" than the general run of humans for absorbing devoured memories, which is sensible enough given its apparent evolutionary strategy. This adaptation is good enough that (like Severian with Thecla) it actually seems to incarnate the personality of its victims, to the point where, having devoured and "become" the father of little Severian, it willingly(?) sacrifices itself to save its "wife" and "child." To some extent, then, the personality of the victim is more in control than that of the alzabo itself which, presumably, would not care about them except as food. (Actually, the two personalities seem almost perfectly blended in the nocturnal standoff, when the alzabo's hunger and the man's desire to be reunited with his wife seek the same physical result, the assimilation of the wife.)

Finally there is Jonas: who is the first person(ality) we know of, in the Books, to leap from one body to another -- he seems to possess the body of Miles in much the way that Horn will later possess that of Silk, although with far less reason/excuse given for it. The personality of the resurrected Miles does not really seem all that much like Jonas, but occasionally exhibits bits of

Jonasosity, to the point where Severian is, at last, able to recognize his presence. In the event, the Jonas persona seems to flee upon being told that Jolenta is dead.

What I'm looking at here is a possible comparison to the relationship between Horn and Silk in the person of the Narrator. In both cases, a new personality is grafted into a severely damaged person (in the case of the Narrator, it's Silk's "spirit" which is severely damaged rather than his body, which is moderately damaged). Over time, the primary personality seems to heal and, at last, the grafted personality leaves.

Obviously there are remarkable differences -- for example, that the grafted personality is the "foreground" personality in the case of the Narrator but the "background" personality in the case of Miles-Jonas. But the similarities are interesting enough to bear in mind as we move forward.

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I'm running out of time for this right now. Let me summarize:

In tBotSS, we need to examine (at least) the translation of Typhon and his friends-and-relations to Mainframe; "divine" possession; Mucor; Silk's vision of his parents; and the rather horrible "afterlife" Mainframe seems to give to the people of the _Whorl_.

In tBotLS, we have to add the nature and interrelationships between Silk, Horn, "the Narrator," Pig, Babbie, and Pas; Scylla-in-Oreb; the nature of inhum intelligence and personality; astral travel by inhumu; and possibly some understanding of what and where the Neighbors are.

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My tentative conclusions are as follows. Note that for all these, the implicit condition is "in the Lupiverse" (which we may regard as related to the "real" universe by virtue of this being [my guesses at] Wolfe's speculations about how it "really" works).

1. "Soul" and/or "spirit" may or may not be the same thing, but they are clearly NOT the same as "brain data" about memory and personality -- the latter being what is transferred to Mainframe or in the mechanism of the alzabo. (An extraordinarily important piece of evidence here is Pig's ability to "see" Mucor even though he can't synch with Mainframe.)
2. Memory/personality "brain data" affect, and are affected by, "soul/ spirit." There is clearly a relationship between these (at least) two things, but what that relationship is, thus far, not clear.
3. I _think_ that what is transferred from Horn to the Narrator is of the nature of soul/spirit, rather than "brain data" as such: which implies that soul/spirit in fact carries memory with it, independent of the physical "brain data" memory. (This is, for the soullist, a somewhat comforting way of thinking about it.)

More? Probably. Later.

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

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Also, maybe the closest parallel to Horn's situation, dead Fava's spirit somehow still wandering around in Mora's dreams and enabling them both to possess Vadsig.

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How so? I assumed that Pig could see Mucor for the same reason that Auk couldn't see Tartaros. (i.e. Mucor stimulates the vision centers of Pig's brain in the same way that Tartaros can't).

-Rostrum

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 15 Jul 2002, 19:11 · follows Michael Straight

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More to the point, the Mainframe gods can affect the vision centers only through the eyes -- Pig, without eyes, cannot upload his Silk to Mainframe. Mucor, walking about as a loose soul/spirit, can appear directly to Pig, probably to his soul/spirit (though I suppose a case could be made that she is "stimulating his vision centers"). At any rate, the manner in which she appears to Pig is clearly of a different order from the way in which Mainframe gods manifest.

James Jordan — 16 Jul 2002, 16:22 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

A handful of scattered thoughts:

At 11:53 AM 7/15/2002 -0700, Blattid wrote:

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Well put.

No, Nutria, there is _not_ -- at this point, anyway -- a consensus that Horn is moved into Babbie at the end of OBW. There is some evidence that he is moved (or copied) to Babbie, possibly/probably at that point, but no certainty by any means, and strong evidence that the Horn persona is still present e.g. when Hide recognizes his father in the Narrator during his (Hide's) first astral trip to Green.

My thinking was that the (non-)"consensus" might be that something of Horn is duplicated into Babbie, while Horn also remains in Silk until the end, and then all of Horn is put into Babbie. I

was asking whether these are "part" of Horn, so that Horn is divided, or whether Horn as such goes into Babbie and also remains in Silk, which seems more likely given the "wholeness" of the other transfers and duplications. I.e., just as there is more than one Silk running around (in Pig and in Silk himself), so there is more than one Horn for a while (in Babbie and in Silk). As Silk-in-Pig seems to move into Silk, so Horn-in-Silk seems to move into Babbie fully at the end. That was my speculation.

Consider, similarly, someone who suffers a less extreme cranial trauma. He retains all memory, but is drastically changed -- there are cases of a "normal" person becoming antisocial, even vicious, after a head blow. This is extremely problematic for the soulist: if physical trauma can cause a person to become thus loveless and (at least outwardly) sinful, is the soul thereby damned, though there is no free choice? A radical Calvinist might have no problem with this; most other Christians are made a bit more uncomfortable when the problem is stated thus baldly.

Thanks for the "might". As a "Calvinist," I would say that God overlooks sins committed in ignorance, an application of Romans 3:25, grounded in the distinction between "sins of wandering astray" and "high-handed sins" in Leviticus. Such sins don't erase the gift given at baptism. As you probably know, true Calvinists hold "free choice" and "predestination" in paradox.

Nutria