

Malrubius and the spirit (was Silk/Malrubius)

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 17 Aug 2002

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 17 Aug 2002, 01:11

Craig wrote:

In an interview, GW mentions a possible connection between Silk and Master Malrubius (I can't locate the interview at the moment). I was wondering if anyone else had determined how/why this connection would be made. Why, for example, would an aquastor (as I recall Malrubius is) Silk be used to communicate with Severian?

Christopher Culver wrote:

I assume that Severian's incidental visions of Malrubius were actually of Silk, but the machine which saves Severian from the Ascians chose to create an aquastor of Malrubius because Sev's visions of Malrubius-really-Silk had made such an impression on him.

IIRC, without seeing the source text again, my impression was quite different. That is, I did not see it as being a case of: astral-Silkhorn is the aquastor Malrubius that Severian sees at times in TBOTNS; I thought it was a direct link to the "Malrubius saw an invisible spirit in the shadows" part of TBOTNS.

Here it is, in fact. In IV, ch. XXIII, paragraph beginning "Master Malrubius was, as I realize now, a very sick man before he died." That paragraph ends "Master Malrubius suffered real illness, which is to see death in shadows."

Next: "As he stood at his little table, one felt that he was conscious of someone standing behind him. He looked straight to the front, never turning his head and hardly moving a shoulder, and he spoke as much for that unknown listener as for us."

Two paragraphs later, he drops a slate pencil. "He did not stoop to pick it up, fearful, I think, that in stooping he might glimpse the invisible presence."

This is what I made of the linkage between astral Silkhorn and Malrubius: that Malrubius had somehow seen astral Silk.

But this is problematic, since in RETURN TO THE WHORL Severian pesters the astral Silk into seeing his dog (RTTW 396), which confirms that it must be 2 years prior to Severian's Reign; yet Malrubius died years before that (I've estimated around 10 years before). We don't have any suggestion that Silk met Malrubius, nor that he took any trip to Urth that was ten years in the past (and I'm one of those who argue that Silk's astral projection is purely across space and not at all across time -- so it is impossible for Silk to visit Malrubius).

Then Master Gurloes catches Severian with Oreb and asks him what it is and Severian says it is Master Malrubius's. Then Silk touches Gurloes and Gurloes gets spooked (perhaps linking to Gurloes's odd behaviors mentioned by Severian in TBOTNS).

So this would be the point in the text that directly makes the "Severian associates Silk with Malrubius" statement.

With this we can see that, before Severian ever saw the Malrubius aquastor, he saw astral-Silk (dressed like a torturer); and although Severian had been told by Silk that he was not a spirit of the dead (RTTW 390 and before), when Gurloes catches Severian with Oreb, Severian basically tells Gurloes that the spirit of dead Malrubius is there (as a bluff or as a true belief remains open for debate; but in any case, the look of astral-Silk must be pretty close to that of Malrubius for the claim to have any effect, and it does have effect in that it spooks Gurloes).

Christopher Culver's point about the ship-made-aquastor, while it might be a tad off in the details (Severian had been impressed by a Malrubius ghost a few times before he met that one -- it wasn't the first time), is interesting in that it points to the likelihood of different sources for each Malrubius spirit: the ship-made-aquastor is a "techno-ghost" and the one who visits Severian sleeping by the campfire, and leaves a warm spot, is probably a real ghost; etc. IIRC Sev saw Malrubius at least one time in the corridors of time.

=mantis=

Ian Bratt — 17 Aug 2002, 04:10 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

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

From: Michael Andre-Driussi <mantis at siriusfiction.com>

To: <urth at urth.net>

Sent: Friday, August 16, 2002 7:11 PM

Subject: (urth) Malrubius and the spirit (was Silk/Malrubius)

Mantis wrote:

...when Gurloes catches Severian with Oreb, Severian basically tells Gurloes that the spirit of dead Malrubius is there (as a bluff or as a true

belief remains open for debate; but in any case, the look of astral-Silk must be pretty close to that of Malrubius for the claim to have any effect, and it does have effect in that it spooks Gurloes).

Has anyone considered the possibility that Silk and Malrubius are distant kin? We know embryo-Silk was chosen to be stored on the whorl for known leadership abilities. Malrubius seems to have been quite a leader and important figure in his prime. Could it be that Malrubius is a great-great-etc-nephew of Silk's? That would explain the resemblance. I know it's pretty far-fetched and can't really be proved but it could be the relationship that GW hinted at in his interview.

-Ian