

finally - a mechanism: baptism

The Urth list — 4 messages, 2 voices, 03 Dec 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3645>

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James Jordan — 03 Dec 2002, 19:57

At 08:22 AM 12/3/2002, marc wrote:

Here is a mechanism that we may want to look at for time travel:

Remember that when Fava and Inclito's mother tell their stories, the narrator has the ability to enter their story. In other words, he can alter events that he hears about and use his "power" to enter the story. He actually appears in Inclito's mother's story as a figure from her past, while he changes Fava's story. I argue that his astral travel can be based off of something that he hears about - and that one of Typhon's big concerns when he scanned himself into mainframe was the conciliator, so that when Silk's spirit is reunited with his body from Pig at the very end of the flashback scenes of return to the whorl, it brings with it Pas' preoccupation with the figure of the Conciliator - and it also programs him with Typhon's obsession to meet and possibly influence the conciliator, sending Silk's spirit across time to find that man at his true birth - his baptism in the river. If you want to argue that Severian was not dead at the exact first time that Silk appears, you have to factor in the very significant drowning in Gyll that must be taking place EXACTLY as Silk appears in that time - the true birth (or death) of the Severian we know - and therefore the logical focal point for his vivimancer-hood.

Now this is a good thought, but what does it mean? I'm finding it hard to wrap around Typhon's supposed concern to find the Conciliator, this being passed on to Passilk, and then on to the Narrator, etc.

I suggest we think more about the Outsider here, since Severian's baptism is clearly Outsider stuff. Like Silk's enlightenment, it is his point of initiation into his "messianic calling."

Silk has been Enlightened when the Holy Spirit falls upon him. This is clearly like Jesus' baptism, and thus like all baptisms. Later, Silk himself undergoes death, burial, and resurrection. Now the Narrator arrives on Urth right at the time of Severian's baptism, death, and first resurrection. That seems a better link, IMO: that one specially baptized man is drawn to the moment of another special man's baptism.

At the moment Severian is starting his new life, Silk Plus appears to him and spends a little time with him. Is there some passing on of Silk Plus's wisdom to Severian implied, if only a few key thoughts? Is the Narrator helping Severian become the Conciliator?

This SEEMS the right moment in Severian's young life for Silk to arrive and pass on his wisdom to him.

Now, either this is a coincidence in the overall historical "plan" of the Outsider, so that Silk's lifespan has come to the same point in time as Severian's baptism on Urth; or else as you have argued there is a draw across time to this event.

One might argue, building on the above, that the draw across time is the baptism of Severian. The baptized, and then dead & resurrected, and now mature and aged Silk, himself clearly a "conciliator," is drawn across time to meet the Conciliator right at the beginning of his new life, precisely because of who Silk is and who Severian is. If this does not seem like "good SF,"

remember that Silk's enlightenment was a "purely spiritual event" not paralleled by anything "scientific." In this narrative the Outsider is a player, though only openly an occasional one. At the same time, if the only "mechanism" is the plan of the Outsider, a link of the Spirit so to speak, then a "draw across time" is no more credible than the "historical-predestinated coincidence" option discussed above.

In defense of the Blushas thesis, I can point out that "looping in time" is a theme in the Severian books, and that introducing this event might hint at another loop: Silk, living much later in history, goes back in time to help initiate the Conciliator's work. This notion by itself seems quite Lupine. But I submit we need corroborative evidence for a "draw across time," for by itself this "coincidence" need be nothing more than the "plan of the Outsider" to bring both events together at the same time.

At present, I'm satisfied with the notion that Silk precedes Severian in time, and that Severian is partly a disciple of Silk.

Nutria

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 03 Dec 2002, 23:28 · follows James Jordan

Nutria wrote:

I suggest we think more about the Outsider here, since Severian's baptism is clearly Outsider stuff.

Well ... Increate stuff. ;*)

Like Silk's enlightenment, it is his point of initiation into his "messianic calling." Silk has been Enlightened when the Holy Spirit falls upon him. This is clearly like Jesus' baptism, and thus like all baptisms.

Well, all "valid" baptisms ... I wouldn't care to make the argument that, say, John's baptisms (at least prior to Jesus' showing up) necessarily brought the HS to the baptisee ... but that's one of those theological details what bore so many of our participants ...

Later, Silk himself undergoes death, burial, and resurrection.

Goodness. And can it have happened that none of us has thought of Horn's experience in the pit that way? I know I haven't, but now suddenly it smashes me in the face as one of those "too obvious to notice" things Wolfe purloinedlettrically scatters all over his texts.

Now the Narrator arrives on Urth right at the time of Severian's baptism, death, and first resurrection. That seems a better link, IMO: that one specially baptized man is drawn to the moment of another special man's baptism.

Ummm. _Three_ specially baptised men, counting whatever is left of Horn, and counting Pas, who has also died and been resurrected at this point ... But with all due respect, that seems more like a thematic reason (akin to the gun-waiting-to-be-fired) than an in-story mechanism; why, in plot-logic rather than thematics, does the Narrator appear at _that_ time? It remains simpler (imho) to presume that there's no time-travel involved.

(Indeed, you recognize the thematic value when you say:

This SEEMS the right moment in Severian's young life for Silk to arrive and pass on his wisdom to him.

)

Now, either this is a coincidence in the overall historical "plan" of the Outsider,

With God there are no coincidences...

If this does not seem like "good SF," remember that Silk's enlightenment was a "purely spiritual event" not paralleled by anything "scientific."

I have trouble accepting that ... Wolfe, throughout the Sun books, goes to a great deal of trouble to maintain a sort of ambiguity where the events that seem supernatural also have a naturalistic explanation (though those explanations often feel quite unsatisfying when stated baldly). In the case of Silk's enlightenment, he tosses us Crane's theory of a cerebral accident -- as a herring _so_ red that nobody in their right mind will believe it; leaving us wondering where the "real" naturalistic explanation lies. I have never found it, but remain convinced, because Wolfe has otherwise kept his method so consistent, that he must have planted it somewhere: possibly someplace where Crane's theory hides it from us...

In this narrative the Outsider is a player, though only openly an occasional one.

With the exception of Silk's enlightenment, does the Outsider make any other interventions that don't have alternate, "naturalistic" explanations?

In defense of the Blushas thesis, I can point out that "looping in time" is a theme in the Severian books, and that introducing this event might hint at another loop: Silk, living much later in history, goes back in time to help initiate the Conciliator's work.

While remaining firmly dubious about the "later in history/goes back in time" part, the rest, I find quite delightful ... one might even see the Narrator's appearance in Severian's life as somewhat akin to the way John the B plays the Elijah role in Jesus' life. (While Silk stands very much as a Moses figure, he seems to have aspects of many of the major prophets, notably Jeremiah...)

At present, I'm satisfied with the notion that Silk precedes Severian in time, and that Severian is partly a disciple of Silk.

I agree completely.

James Jordan — 04 Dec 2002, 17:34 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

At 05:28 PM 12/3/2002, Blattid wrote back to me:

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Yeah, but in the interview Wolfe said it was purely supernatural, and my question was whether it as purely "scientific" or both in a parallel way. I agree that we really seem to "need"

something more than just a spiritual link between Silk and Severian; I was just pointing out that if this is all there turns out to be, it is not wholly unlupine.

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Is there another explanation for Silk's resurrection?

Nutria

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 04 Dec 2002, 17:41 · follows James Jordan

Yeah, but in the interview Wolfe said it was purely supernatural,

Oops. I fergot all about that...

and my question was whether it as purely "scientific" or both in a parallel way. I agree that we really seem to "need" something more than just a spiritual link between Silk and Severian; I was just pointing out that if this is all there turns out to be, it is not wholly unlupine.

Okay, I'll buy that.

In this narrative the Outsider is a player, though only openly an occasional one.

With the exception of Silk's enlightenment, does the Outsider make any other interventions that don't have alternate, "naturalistic" explanations?

Is there another explanation for Silk's resurrection?

Ummm, he was only mostly-dead? (If he was completely dead, they'd have gone through his pockets for loose cardbits.)

The piece of Severian that (I think it's) Don says is going to be in him resurrected him?

Gene Wolfe did it?

Oh well ... Yeah, I'm just futzing. Clearly the Outsider acts as a major player a _lot_ in the Long/Short books, not least in the Eucharist on Blue.