

silver glass

The Urth list — 34 messages, 11 voices, 10 Jan 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4295>

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aramini1 at cox.net — 10 Jan 2005, 18:47

Hmmm - here is my attempt to provide textual evidence. This is chapter 18 of Return to the whorl, the first couple of pages (I have the SFBC edition with me, so the page numbers are off).

They fix Pigs eye. "The room had darkened as he spoke, the lights on the ceiling fading to mere specks of gold; he looked at the glass and saw the nurse manipulating a control."

After the first break in the chapter:

"When the nurses glass had faded to silver-gray, Pig ventured, "Yer gang ter stay wit'me, bucky?"

And then, later: "Something in Pig's face had changed. He said, "And in the third, Horn?' 'Patera!'

Oreb whistled shrilly.

'I would be a positive danger to you,' Pig said. 'Strength and a stout heart are hazardous qualities where they cannot prevail.'

'Yes.' He wiped his eyes.

Naked and subtly altered, the face was still Pig's; Silk's well-remembered voice issued from its lips. 'Still, you would take me if you could.'

'Yes. Yes. I would. If we reached New Viron, I would not have failed. Or even if you reached it alone.'

'You do not wish to fail.' Pig's big hand tightened on his.

He said, 'I would give my life not to fail,' and meant it. 'You already have.'

There is a monitor in the lander that blurs around the mouth, and calls the passenger Silk.

So here is my idea: Silver Silk in Pig, identified as Patera by Silk's Body, speaks to Horn in this passage and calls him Horn. He then realizes that Horn has given up his corporeal body to salvage Silk, and that Horn wants to take the Silk in Pig back with him. Would Silver Silk abandon the persona of Horn, or would he go back to Blue with him, after he realizes that "[Horn] would take [Silk] if he could."

Marc Aramini

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 10 Jan 2005, 19:04 · in reply to aramini1 at cox.net

Well, this is enough to make it plausible certainly. I am not convinced - partly because of the timing problems that have already been discussed, but those can probably be overcome - but mostly because I don't think it fits very well for Silk _not_ to have been present in the Narrator from the moment the Horn persona took over, for him to simply have vanished.

But I could easily be wrong.

On Mon, 10 Jan 2005 21:47:50 -0500, aramini1 at cox.net <aramini1 at cox.net> wrote:
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Marc Aramini

James Wynn — 11 Jan 2005, 06:59 · in reply to aramini1 at cox.net

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Note: I will refer to the protagonist of the Short Sun as "the Narrator" even though he is not the writer in this case.

This is textual support to be sure but I am still influenced by the "Psyche vs Soul" discussion we had recently. However...

First of all, it seems that Silver Silk is saying he will not go. Secondly, it seems that Silver Silk recognized -- even though the Narrator did not -- that Horn "already had" on all counts: He *had

died* and he *had not failed*. It is already determined (whether Silver Silk possesses the Narrator or not) that Horn will succeed in taking Silk to Blue. He will take Silk's body and all his memories (the Narrator makes several errors in memory while on the Whorl that prove he still retains Silk's memories as well as Horn's). Since his special powers of leadership are genetic, that part of Silk will be taken to Blue as well. Silver Silk is "merely" Silk's psyche and is no obvious improvement over the "Silk psyche" already present in the Narrator -- in fact, Silver Silk will lack the experience of running Viron so he might not even be as good.

So Silk went to Blue as surely as Horn brought him back. Horn and Silk's psyche's are present in the Narrator (of course, I believe there is a third entity as well...a soul...and Silver Silk as a purely informational entity cannot fill that role).

~ Crush

StoneOx17 at aol.com — 11 Jan 2005, 12:45 · follows James Wynn

Marc <aramini1 at cox.net> writes:

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Pretty convincing. Especially when combined with the fact that the neighbors said something to the effect (I don't have my copy here ... in fact, I believe I've given it away, so I may have to buy another one to reread it with this revelation in mind) that Horn was being put into a man's body whose spirit was dying. So let me recapitulate, and maybe change things around a little. So what you're saying is that when Horn reached the Whorl (in Silk's former body), Silk's was already dead. But a part of Silk's psyche had been uploaded and incorporated into Pas, and another part had been subsequently downloaded to Pig, who was blinded. When Pig gets his new eye, the part of Silk in Pig is uploaded into Mainframe, and knows that Horn is looking for Silk, so downloads back into Horn-in-Silk's-body, maybe revitalizing a part of Silk's psyche that somehow remained there.

The only question I have left is: if the Silk in Horn's body is Silver Silk, and not the near-dead psyche of Silk, why did it take three books for the narrator to realize that he was really Silk?

Stone Ox (Peter)

Chris — 11 Jan 2005, 15:00 · in reply to James Wynn

I more or less agree, but now that you've got my interest piqued can you give an example? I don't remember seeing any occasions that made it drop dead certain to me that he had Silk's memories, but then it has been a little while.

Crush said:

Narrator or not) that Horn will succeed in taking Silk to Blue. He will take Silk's body and all his memories (the Narrator makes several errors in memory while on the Whorl that prove he still retains Silk's memories as well as Horn's).

James Wynn — 11 Jan 2005, 15:33 · in reply to Chris

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Oh that's a fine thing. I can't remember a mistake at this moment but I remember NOTING them as I read RTTW. Also, I don't have my books with me. A cursory search in Amazon's book search does offer this, however, although it is not an error and it is not unequivocal:

Narrator talking to the godling (who refers to him as "holy one"):

"It was as if there were shooting stars in his hands, like the stars at the bottom of the grave to which Silk and Hyacinth had driven Orpine's body in a dream he recalled with uncanny clarity."
RTTW 138

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 11 Jan 2005, 15:42 · in reply to James Wynn

There is no doubt that the Narrator, right from _OBW_ on, has memories of Silk's life and occasionally slips and says things as if he were Silk rather than Horn: thus referring to his wife as "Hyacinth," for example.

On Tue, 11 Jan 2005 18:33:11 -0500, James Wynn <thewynns at earthlink.net> wrote:
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Silk's body and all his memories (the Narrator makes several errors in memory while on the Whorl that prove he still retains Silk's memories as well as Horn's).

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James Wynn — 11 Jan 2005, 17:04 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

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That is true but the entire series was written after the Narrator returns to Blue and therefore after he separates from Pig. So the only errors and references that can "count" are those from RTTW describing events on the Whorl and only those that are dialog by the Narrator or that refer directly to his state of mind at the time.

That's why asking for specific instances is so tough. But I *am* convinced they are there (and the quote I gave is proof enough for me).

~ Crush

aramini1 at cox.net — 11 Jan 2005, 17:22 · follows James Wynn

The big, huge problem with getting specific instances of Silk in the third person "HE" of RTTW whorl scenes is that they weren't written by a witness - they are 3rd person - and why is that? Unfortunately, any writing of Silk into the narrator can easily be relegated to the discretion of the editors - making it impossible to PROVE his [psychic] identity one way or the other.

Why does the story start where it does? Is this because Silver Silk is Horn's impetus for writing? Is it just a matter of convenience? Or is it because he wants to find who he is through the process of writing his story, now that he has been commingled with Silk?

Marc

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~ Crush

Chris — 11 Jan 2005, 17:22 · in reply to James Wynn

What makes it quite tricky is that any supposed slips that we can catch are for events that we've already seen described in BotLS - authored by Nettle and *Horn*. All we know about Silk's life, even, is what Horn has had described to him, what he has interpolated/imagined, or downright made up to fill in gaps. I have never been able to fully dismiss the possibility that Silk is largely a fictional character invented by Horn (to give hope to the inhabitants of Blue, or for whatever reason).

Not that I'm advocating this as the most likely theory or anything. Just that our knowledge of the "real Silk" has to keep Horn's part in BotLS in mind.

There is no doubt that the Narrator, right from _OBW_ on, has memories of Silk's life and occasionally slips and says things as if he were Silk rather than Horn: thus referring to his wife as "Hyacinth," for example.

That is true but the entire series was written after the Narrator returns to Blue and therefore after he separates from Pig. So the only errors and references that can "count" are those from RTTW describing events on the Whorl and only those that are dialog by the Narrator or that refer directly to his state of mind at the time.

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~ Crush

James Wynn — 11 Jan 2005, 17:52 · in reply to aramini1 at cox.net

Marc says

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Yes. But then we have to suppose what is the motive of Hide and Co. in putting little hints of confusion about the Narrator's identity into his statements and references to his state of mind --unless the Narrator told them it happened. At some point you have to say that Wolfe tells stories from "a distance" simply because he likes to (either with a narrator who does know how alien his own nature is, or has a such a short term memory that he can't verify that he wrote the document, or who is insane, or who is someone that really could only barely know the protagonist). Not because there is some sort of secret literary clue to be provide in him doing so. If I can't trust the veracity of the narrator even when there is no reason not to, how am I supposed to figure anything out anyway?

Chris points out that we can't prove that Silk is anything but a creation of Horn's. Why not Nettle as well? We also can't prove that Latro -- even if we were to interrogate him -- wrote most of the Soldier stories. He can't verify it. I'm not going down that road, but it is one that Wolfe has offered to us.

Why does the story start where it does? Is this because Silver Silk is Horn's impetus for writing? Is it just a matter of convenience? Or is it because he wants to find who he is through the process of writing his story, now that he has been commingled with Silk?

Most likely because he didn't have an opportunity to write until he became "sultan" on Blue. Anyway, it is Horn who has more of a proven penchant for writing than Silk did.

~ Crush

Adam Stephanides — 13 Jan 2005, 14:51 · in reply to Chris

I'd said I wouldn't rehearse my objections to the Silk-to-Pig-to-Horn scenario, but other people have raised the issue, here are some of my reasons for believing that Silk's memories and personality are present in the Narrator throughout his stay on the Whorl.

1. An old post of mine from the Whorl list, when the topic was first thrashed out, from 2/14/01:

on 2/13/01 8:05 PM, Kevin J. Maroney at kmaroney at ungames.com wrote:
To me, the giveaway that there's a huge amount of Silk in "the protagonist" from the moment that Horn moves into his body is the amount of minutiae that he displays about the religion of Pas and the Children while on the _Whorl_.

Indeed; and not only his knowledge, but the sententiousness with which he dispenses it.

I know the conversation about "what do you call it when you read the future from the flight of birds?" is with Pig, and I believe he does a full exegesis of an excerpt from the Chrasomological Writings before the scene Michael discusses. The Chrasmomancy in particular strikes me as being unmistakably Silk; in fact, while reading the novel I felt it was somewhat

out of character for Horn to be so Silkian. I should know better.....

Anyway, refresh my memory. Does the protagonist indulge in Chrasmomancy before he gives his eye to Pig? If so, I'd say that's strong evidence that he's largely Silk from the moment they merge.

He does, in Chapter 12, with Olivine, an exegesis that takes several pages. Very Silkian.

There are additional signs of Silk's presence in "Horn" on the Whorl. For one thing, there is his strong visceral reaction to the knife he finds at his feet (13-14). I don't see how to explain this, other than that he unconsciously remembers this knife injuring him. For another, almost as soon as "Horn" appears on Whorl, he is thinking about Hyacinth and of how much he wanted her and how much better things would have been if he had gotten her (this motif recurs later, though I can't find the place at the moment).

2. From another post of mine from the Whorl list, from 2/16/01, on his behavior in and around Blood's mansion:

He first tells Pig he wants to enter the mansion alone, with no explanation (118, 119). When Pig insists on coming with him, he deceives him so as to be able to go in alone (121). Once inside, he gets "a sort of itch" to find Hyacinth's bedroom, although he tells himself it's foolish. He decides to try to return to Hound, hoping to blunder into Hyacinth's bedroom on the way. And he does eventually find himself, by chance, in Hyacinth's dressing chamber; although he's never been there before, he "knew with absolute certainty" that that's what it is (134-35). From this evidence "Horn" is just as fixated upon Hyacinth as the Silk-possessed Pig is, though better able to rationalize it.

3. The Narrator on the Whorl knows that he's in someone else's body, and he knows that everyone he meets thinks he's Silk. Yet he never makes, or even considers, the obvious conclusion that he's in Silk's body. I don't see any good explanation for this, apart from the influence of Silk's personality denying its own identity.

4. Is it really likely that Silk-in-Pig would possess Horn and let himself be taken to Blue? Silk-in-Pig had told Horn that he wanted to return to Mainframe to be reunited with Kypris, iirc. Would he then immediately embark upon another exile from Kypris, with only a very uncertain hope of return? Marc presented it as an act of self-sacrifice for Horn's sake; but, for all the talk about Silk's saintliness, he put his personal feelings for Hyacinth above his duty. I see no evidence that Silk-in-Pig would be any different.

As to Marc's questioning of the reliability of the third-person sections: to be sure, from the point of view of realism it's rather implausible that the Narrator's conversations with his family could have contained the moment-to-moment detail of the Narrator's thoughts that we find in the the "editors'" narrative. But I don't see that the book gains anything by treating these sections as unreliable. Unlike in 5HC or PEACE, the "editors'" reliability or lack of it isn't one of the things the book is about. If we're going to say anything about the Narrator's time on the Whorl, we have to assume that the accounts of it are reliable.

--Adam

James Wynn — 13 Jan 2005, 15:53 · in reply to Adam Stephanides

If we're going to say anything about the Narrator's time on the Whorl, we have to assume that the accounts of it are reliable.

Nice analysis, Adam.

One other thing, if the accounts of Silk's psyche being present in the Narrator are in doubt due to Hide&co's authorship, then all the alleged textual clues that Silver Silk entered Silk's body are equally in doubt. It is not fair to accept the third person authors' account as valid for the references for the theory you like, and then reject every clue to the contrary based on their unreliability.

~ Crush

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 13 Jan 2005, 16:48 · in reply to James Wynn

On Thu, 13 Jan 2005 18:53:53 -0500, James Wynn <thewynns at earthlink.net> wrote:

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Right: in the end, we have the text we have and no guarantee of anything behind it.

I said something of this sort long ago, but let me elaborate:

I think that Wolfe has deliberately set up textual problems analogous to those facing interpreters of the New Testament.

Specifically, I see a clear analogy between the LS and the Gospels - a detailed account by someone who, it turns out, wasn't actually there for most of the events narrated. Horn's "defense" at the end reminds me quite a bit of the first couple of verses of Luke, in fact.

And then ... the journeys of a man who's imbued with Silk's spirit? Whose writings have made Silk a godlike hero figure to many peoples? Gadzooks, could this be an analogy to the Acts of the Apostles and Especially Saul Who Is Called Paul Except At The Beginning?

--Dan'l

www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer

Freedom has no barcode.

--J.G. Ballard

Chris — 14 Jan 2005, 12:09 · in reply to James Wynn

Well, I did mention Nettle parenthetically, I just didn't feel like repeating "Horn and/or Nettle" throughout. But the more I think about it this line of thinking isn't just gratuitous and almost can't be accidental, either.

The most suggestive thing that immediately occurs to me is that, in Long Sun and even more so in his travels on Blue in BotSS, one of the primary devices or M.O.'s associated with Silk is the way he can deceive the bad guy by suggestion, without actually lying; the person talking to him ends up inferring, from Silk's silence on a given subject, from his utterance of statements that can be taken in more than one way, or even from his outright denial, the very conclusion Silk refuses to lead them to directly. The particular aspect where Silk reinforces their suspicion by denying that it is true is striking. Now, during the portion of the books purportedly narrated by Silkhorn, does he ever actually claim to be Silk? And how is it that we come to that conclusion anyway, despite his repeated denials in the text that he is Silk (so much so that we come up

with explanations in which his denial that he is Silk somehow makes it *more* plausible that he actually is Silk)? Is the reader exempt from being tricked in the same way characters in the book are?

Now, irrespective of Silk's actual existence, we have to accept as a fact that the author of BotSS is aware of this device/strategy of... what can you call it, leading someone to deceive themselves? If the author didn't have a good grasp/mastery of the device themselves, they wouldn't be able to portray someone else doing it so vividly and insightfully. So the author of the books is ultimately as capable of this kind of deception as Silk is.

There are potentially good motives for such a deception: the book's hypothetical audience are the people of Blue, who are in desperate need of hope and of a particular message. A real person who is *present*, as the source of such a message, has the problem of being able to be killed, humiliated, discredited - one of the reasons, incidentally, that I felt so strongly that it was unavoidable for Silk to leave at the end of BotSS. Silk, present only as he is presented in the books, is an unimpeachable source if you believe in him (and, clearly, we all find the portrayal convincing enough that we think there was a real Silk). But "if Silk wasn't real, we would have to invent him."

There are a lot of textual passages that suggest a real Silk, but unfortunately most of them aren't helpful for this particular purpose. The passages that are most of interest are the ones that could be verified or denied by a character (who is not the author/editor) that could be heard by the presumed audience (the people of Blue). This suggests to me that what may be the best place in the text to look is Silkhorn's final encounter with Remora. That scene certainly suggests that Silkhorn is really Silk, but the question is, on close reading, does it tell us this unequivocally? I'm going to check this passage tonight; it would be nice if it settled this nagging doubt, but I have a feeling that it is going to (deliberately) leave just enough ambiguity...

Chris points out that we can't prove that Silk is anything but a creation of Horn's. Why not Nettle as well? We also can't prove that Latro -- even if we were to interrogate him -- wrote most of the Soldier stories. He can't verify it. I'm not going down that road, but it is one that Wolfe has offered to us.

Why does the story start where it does? Is this because Silver Silk is Horn's impetus for writing? Is it just a matter of convenience? Or is it because he wants to find who he is through the process of writing his story, now that he has been commingled with Silk?

Most likely because he didn't have an opportunity to write until he became "sultan" on Blue. Anyway, it is Horn who has more of a proven penchant for writing than Silk did.

~ Crush

James Wynn — 14 Jan 2005, 18:06 · in reply to Chris

Well, I did mention Nettle parenthetically, I just didn't feel like repeating "Horn and/or Nettle" throughout.

Ah! So you did. But I could extend this to every character in the story, not just Nettle. But then, from this post (I think) I see you are getting at something else.

Now, during the portion of the books purportedly narrated by Silkhorn, does he ever actually claim to be Silk?

No, he doesn't. Not even when he comes to terms with "himself" through Remora's counsel. Everywhere else he adamantly denies it.

I'm not sure I understand your point, but I'm going to take a crack at this anyway.

And how is it that we come to that conclusion anyway, despite his repeated denials in the text that he is Silk (so much so that we come up with explanations in which his denial that he is Silk somehow makes it **more** plausible that he actually is Silk)?

Well, for one thing, Mint and Bison are quite convinced he is. Hound says he's seen pictures of Silk and that he is certain he is. They are certain he is Silk because he looks like him, which suggests there was a Silk to look like. This is the part written by Hide&co. but I suppose the conversations could be made up as well. Then again, Mint and Bison's description of how Silk left the Caldeship does not seem designed to make him look heroic.

But then, all these characters could be all made up I suppose...they really **are** all made up of course, so if they were made IN the narration as well, how could we tell?

Remora on Blue certainly remembers a Silk. So does Marrow. And Scleroderma wrote an alternate book about him.

Is the reader exempt from being tricked in the same way characters in the book are?

Well, Civet, you know what I think on this. I believe he is not Silk. I believe he is "Horn", but not the Horn he tells Hide that he is. I also believe he **is** Silk and Horn, but in an entirely different sense.

There are a lot of textual passages that suggest a real Silk, but unfortunately most of them aren't helpful for this particular purpose. The passages that are most of interest are the ones that could be verified or denied by a character (who is not the author/editor) that could be heard by the presumed audience (the people of Blue). This suggests to me that what may be the best place in the text to look is Silkhorn's final encounter with Remora. That scene certainly suggests that Silkhorn is really Silk, but the question is, on close reading, does it tell us this unequivocally? I'm going to check this passage tonight; it would be nice if it settled this nagging doubt, but I have a feeling that it is going to (deliberately) leave just enough ambiguity...

See, here's why I'm not sure I'm getting your point exactly. If we accept the Narrator's telling of Remora and how he came to Lizard to talk enlist Horn in a mission to get Silk, then isn't it clear that Silk is a real person?

~ Crush

Chris — 15 Jan 2005, 02:35 · in reply to James Wynn

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how could we tell?

Well, much of this is for the sake of argument, although I do think the statement "if Silk didn't really exist, we would have to invent him" does have a certain truth to it, regardless - it is in a way this phrase that makes me take seriously the possibility that, within the context of the story, he was invented. (Or that, thematically, it doesn't *matter* whether he was invented, but this will take more explanation on my part so I'll leave that question for later).

Since this story is sort of a letter wrapped in multiple envelopes, I am first removing Wolfe (and us, in a way) from the equation temporarily - so the author we are concerned with is the fictional author (Horn, Silk, Nettle, anyone else), and the audience is the collected population of Blue who have access to the books. (I know even this can be approached more radically, but in this conjecture we're already stretched so far that this would just be gratuitous).

As far as the audience of Blue is concerned, there are characters that can't be entirely made up because, presumably, someone would know some of them (or know someone who knew some of them, etc), and some events that would be matters of public record. Relatively few of these would be characters from BotLS, but there would be some. Of these Remora seems particularly important to me because he is in a position to confirm or deny to anyone who asks him whether or not some of the events of BotLS really happened. This already makes the possibility of Silk being *wholly* fictional unlikely, unless there is some reasonable motivation that could lead him to play along with such a fiction. In any event most, if not all, of the rest of the characters on Blue who have a similar ability to confirm or deny are dead or have no interaction with the narrator at the time of RttW.

Well, Civet, you know what I think on this. I believe he is not Silk. I
believe he is "Horn", but not the Horn he tells Hide that he is.
I also believe he *is* Silk and Horn, but in an entirely different sense.

I don't know the exact specifics of what you think about Silkhorn, but I know that I agree with you on the general points of it.

As far as purely textual analysis goes, I think it safe to assume that the narrator who returns is not the same physical body that left; there are a multitude of people available to the assumed audience who could verify, so deception on this point wouldn't work for the author. For mostly thematic reasons I believe that he is Horn, and for the same thematic reasons I agree that he *is* Silk in at least one sense, and possibly more than one. I think that in an important way the point of BotSS is about "being Silk", not just for Horn but for everyone on Blue, and the point is developed microcosmically (is that a word?) in Horn, and macrocosmically in the events that unfold around him.

See, here's why I'm not sure I'm getting your point exactly. If we accept
the Narrator's telling of Remora and how he came to Lizard to talk enlist
Horn in a mission to get Silk, then isn't it clear that Silk is a real
person?

~ Crush

Well, this was one of the things that nagged at me even when I was reading the book, because I sort of wondered about Horn as an author before I even started BotSS. And this led to a disturbingly plausible interpretation of the mission.

Remora wasn't the only one to come to Lizard; he came with the most powerful people in the

town, and he seems to have been only a reluctant partner. We know that there was no love lost between them and Horn, and I got the impression that they also didn't like the influence of his book. Given their somewhat dubious moral standing (regardless of their power), it would have probably been futile for one of them to try to defuse or discredit the BotLS, which clearly appealed to people. So it occurred to me at the time that it would be a convenient way to get rid of Horn without having his blood on their hands to go to him and say "So, if your messiah-figure is real, why don't you go bring him back for us? Here's a ticket on the next ship out." Horn is placed in a position where he can refuse, discrediting himself to some extent and lessening the power of his book, or go off on the mission. Once gone, he could die or otherwise not come back (a winning situation for them), come back empty-handed (again lessening the power of the book and losing favor himself), or come back with someone. Even if that someone were Silk, a real Silk would be far preferable to them than a literary Silk because a real Silk could be killed, framed up and smeared, humiliated, or otherwise ruined and made an example of.

And it seems to me that Horn's exposition of his reasons for going are meant to put his reader off the cynical consideration of why he really had little choice but to leave. But regardless, it does seem like the powers that be really didn't expect to see him return.

Andrew Bollen — 15 Jan 2005, 05:59 · in reply to Chris

Could have missed it, but haven't noticed anyone giving the place name definition of "Ormsby" courtesy of google: "Village of the Worm/Dragon". (The real Ormsby in northern England is apparently more likely to have been founded by a Viking named Orm, ie Dragon, apparently a common enough name for Vikings.)

"Art Ormsby" then translates to "Art from Dragonville". Griffonford sounds pretty much like Dragonville in Mag's little passage in the Room of Lost Loves - with only Black Bethold and a couple of others resisting Setr & Grengarm. If that's a connection we're supposed to draw, I find it more confusing than anything. If Art's surname is Ormsby, then it's probably also his father's. I think we know that his mother or some version of her went to Griffonford from America, but are we also to suppose that his father (or some version of him) went *from* Griffonford *to* America?

You never know with Wolfe whether you're loading too much on to little things, or not enough.

Unrelated, but I've also missed any mention of Michael as the commander of the host of God in the First Battle and/or the Last Battle. In the second, he slays the Great Worm Satan. He's clearly an appropriate patron for Art.

Andrew Bollen — 15 Jan 2005, 07:23 · in reply to Andrew Bollen

I forgot to mention Setr also. Apparently "r" is an Old Norse masculine case ending. I vaguely recall somebody associating Setr with some figure from Norse mythology, but it seems to me that we also have Typhon/Set once again as the figure of a tyrant with ambitions to conquer heaven.

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

From: "Andrew Bollen" <abollen at internode.on.net>

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth-urth.net at lists.urth.net>

Sent: Sunday, January 16, 2005 12:28 AM

Subject: (urth) Ormsby, Michael

Could have missed it, but haven't noticed anyone giving the place name definition of "Ormsby" courtesy of google: "Village of the Worm/Dragon". (The real Ormsby in northern England is apparently more likely to have

been founded by a Viking named Orm, ie Dragon, apparently a common enough name for Vikings.)

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James Wynn — 15 Jan 2005, 09:19 · in reply to Andrew Bollen

I forgot to mention Setr also. Apparently "r" is an Old Norse masculine case ending. I vaguely recall somebody associating Setr with some figure from Norse mythology, but it seem to me that we also have Typhon/Set once again as the figure of a tyrant with ambitions to conquer heaven.

Actually, I haven't been able to identify any mythological connection to "setr". It's Scandinavian for a fisherman's hut or a farm house. I can't understand the significance unless Wolfe is connecting the term "homestead" with it's synonym "steading" and from there "one who stands in the place of another".

I think Arnthor as much like Typhon as Setr except that Setr does have a "second head" so to speak in the form of Garsecg.

~ Crush

Andy Robertson — 15 Jan 2005, 10:26 · in reply to James Wynn

Surely SETR = SURTUR the primaeval fire giant???

I forgot to mention Setr also. Apparently "r" is an Old Norse masculine case ending. I vaguely recall somebody associating Setr with some figure from Norse mythology

James Wynn — 15 Jan 2005, 11:19 · in reply to Andy Robertson

I forgot to mention Setr also. Apparently "r" is an Old Norse masculine case ending. I vaguely recall somebody associating Setr with some figure from Norse mythology

Surely SETR = SURTUR the primeval fire giant???

Here's the thing about that. Wolfe likes to be precise about his spellings. The name of the Whorl goddess is Sphigx, not Sphinx. Sphigx is the literal transcription of the name from Greek. "Arnthor" is a Scandinavian version of Arthur. Valfather is an actual title for Odin. This seems to be a pattern to me. Wolfe *likes* using *actual* names that are close to the original. Look at names like Garsecg and Garvaon...very precise.

There's a lot to recommend Surtur or Surt or Srtr as a reference to our boy from Muspel, I admit. But there's also a lot that jars with Setr. Surtur isn't JUST a "primeval" fire giant: he remakes the world after Ragnarok, and that doesn't sound like Setr. But my main question is if Wolfe meant Surtur, why didn't he just USE that name? And why Setr of all things? Even if Wolfe had in mind Surtur in mind as well, is this the PRIMARY reason for his choice of name?

~ Crush

Andy Robertson — 15 Jan 2005, 12:39 · in reply to James Wynn

Well the exact meaning of "setr" is "dairy-pasture" according to the Viking Answers Lady (whom it might be well to bookmark).

<http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/>

Surtur isn't JUST a "primeval" fire giant: he remakes the world after Ragnarok,

Pish tosh. Mere Christian interpolation that. Ragnarok is the end.

And Surtur doesn't remake the world (I don't know where you heard that), he burns it all up.

Also Muspelheim is traditionally Surtur's realm, one of the Nine Worlds

First of worlds was Muspellheim, in the Southern regions. It is bright and hot. That place is aflame, and burning and it is impassable to those who are not native to it. There is one called Surt who is stationed there at the frontier to defend that land. He has a flaming sword and at the end of the world he will go and wage war and burn the whole world with fire

(Prose Edda)

Still, I suspect Wolfe may be trying to smuggle in something else. What???

and

that doesn't sound like Setr. But my main question is if Wolfe meant Surtur, why didn't he just USE that name? And why Setr of all things? Even if Wolfe had in mind Surtur in mind as well, is this the PRIMARY reason for his choice of name?

~ Crush

maru dubshinki — 15 Jan 2005, 13:48 · in reply to Andy Robertson

*Maru pounces!

You my friend, just made a big mistake.

Ragnarok is most definitely NOT the end.

That doesn't hold water; both because of the cyclical

elements and numerology in Norse paganism, and because that contradicts directly what is said in the Elder/Poetic Edda. In the Larrington translation, we read in 'The Seeress' Prophecy' that

after the great battle, after Surt 'high flame plays against heaven itself' v57, the seeress continues:

'She sees, coming up a second time,
Earth from the ocean, eternally green;
the waterfall plunges, an eagle soars over it,
hunting fish on the mountain. v59
and most importantly;

'The Aesir meet on Idavoll

and they converse about the mighty Earth-girdler,
and they remember there the great events
and the ancient runes of the Mighty One. v60

after that they refind their old hnefatafl game pieces, Baldr will return from Hel. 'do you understand yet, or what more?' v63

More interesting, the part that leads to the 'christian interpolation' you revile is v65:

'Then the powerful, mighty one, he who rules over
everything,

will come from above, to the judgementplace of the gods.

I personally think it is Odin but...

And, should you persist in your error of seeing the Norse as inhabiting an Eschatological religious framework, check the last, final verse out, the one which really clinches the case for cyclicalness. v66

There comes the dark dragon flying
the shining serpent, up from Dark-of-moon Hills
Nidhogg flies over the plains, in his wings
he carries corpses; now she must sink down.

Even after ragnarok, evil continues.

You should be more careful what you say.

~Maru

Andy Robertson wrote:

Well the exact meaning of "setr" is "dairy-pasture" according to the
Viking Answers Lady (whom it might be well to bookmark).

<http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/>

Surtur isn't JUST a "primeval" fire giant: he remakes the world after
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Pish tosh. Mere Christian interpolation that. Ragnarok is the end.

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bright and hot. That place is aflame, and burning and it is impassable
to those who are not native to it. There is one called Surt who is
stationed there at the frontier to defend that land. He has a flaming
sword and at the end of the world he will go and wage war and burn the
whole world with fire***
(Prose Edda)

Still, I suspect Wolfe may be trying to smuggle in something else.
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~ Crush

James Wynn — 15 Jan 2005, 14:01 · in reply to Andy Robertson

Hartshorn (seeming a bit cranky this afternoon) says:

Well the exact meaning of "setr" is "dairy-pasture" according to the Viking Answers Lady

With apologies to the Viking Answer Lady, here are the results of a quick Google:

<http://www.10callicvol.com/centre/callicvol/> "In addition the Old Norse 'saetr' ('setr') means a shieling or steading and appears in Lewis as 'Shader', in for example 'Cuidhsiadar', cattlefold shieling or farm."

<http://www.northvegr.org/zoega/h247.php>

A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic:

konungs-atsetr, n. king's residence;

-setr, n. royal residence

<http://www.northvegr.org/zoega/h095.php>

A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic:

There's also a seeming use of the word as a verb meaning "to change something". But I don't find it directly referred to anywhere.

By the way, Northvegr.org is definitely worth bookmarking.

Surtur isn't JUST a "primeval" fire giant: he remakes the world after Ragnarok,

Pish tosh. Mere Christian interpolation that. Ragnarok is the end.

Did Hartshorn just pish-tosh me?

From the Prose Edda:

<http://www.northvegr.org/lore/prose2/016.php>

Vidar or Vitharr or Vithar or Withr (etc.) is the son of Odin is but one of the Aesir that survive Ragnarok. He kills Fenrir by pulling apart his jaws and rules in the place of his father. He wears an iron-toed shoe to facilitate ass-kicking.

And Vidar isn't the only one to survive: <http://www.northvegr.org/lore/prose2/017.php> "Then said Ganglere: Do any gods live then? Is there any earth or heaven? Har answered: The earth rises again from the sea, and is green and fair. The fields unsown produce their harvests. Vidar and Vale live. Neither the sea nor Surt's fire has harmed them, and they dwell on the plains of Ida, where Asgard was before. Thither come also the sons of Thor, Mode and Magne, and they have Mjolner. Then come Balder and Hoder from Hel. They all sit together and talk about the things that happened aforetime,---about the Midgard-serpent and the Fenris-wolf. They find in the grass those golden tables which the asas once had."

The last two humans are Lif and Lifthraser, and they repopulate the world.

http://www.northvegr.org/lore/poems/000_07.php

In Vafthr., 50-51, Odin asks: 'Which of the Asir shall rule over the possessions of the gods when Surt's flame shall be extinguished?' And the giant answers: V?thar and V?li shall occupy the dwelling of the gods when Surt's flame shall be quenched.'

Incidentally, Vidar's twin brother also survives as do Thor's sons who reclaim his hammer.

And Surtur doesn't remake the world (I don't know where you heard that), he burns it all up.

That's true. He also slays Frey at Ragnarok. I cannot remember my source on Surtur as a Maker god who remakes things when the Earth rises again from the sea. I don't have access to my books so I can't check it. It is possible that it is not universally accepted, but I don't think it is so obscure that Wolfe would be unaware of it.

Also Muspelheim is traditionally Surtur's realm, one of the Nine Worlds

Right

Still, I suspect Wolfe may be trying to smuggle in something else.
What???

Yes. What, indeed.

~ Crush

James Wynn — 15 Jan 2005, 14:57 · in reply to maru dubshinki

I cannot remember my source on
Surtur as a Maker god who remakes things
when the Earth rises again from the sea.

More interesting, the part that leads to the 'christian
interpolation' you revile is v65:
'Then the powerful, mighty one, he who rules over
everything,
will come from above, to the judgement place of the gods.
I personally think it is Odin but...

Remembering something....

Finn Magussen said I think that Surtur was that "powerful, mighty one, he who rules over everything" who would reveal himself after Ragnarok.

~ Crush

Andy Robertson — 15 Jan 2005, 15:09 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn writes:

Hartshorn (seeming a bit cranky this afternoon) says:

I certainly didn't mean to be angry: I was trying to make a joke. Gotta work on that. I just like the Viking Answers Lady. :-)

The last two humans are Lif and Lifthraser, and they repopulate the world.

I know that the restoration of the world after Ragnarok is part of the Eddas: I happen to believe, however, that it is a late Christian interpolation.

Maybe I am allowing my own religious beliefs to obtrude too plainly here: I am an Odinist and I take this seriously, not as old stories but as a primitive but accurate cosmology, one where the forces of good are authentically outgunned and the world really ends. I don't believe in repeated big bangs or in a reversal of the laws of Thermodynamics.

Still, I suspect Wolfe may be trying to smuggle in something else.
What???

Yes. What, indeed.

The "world" Wolfe creates is very like the Norse universe, with its Overcyns (what genuine word is that BTW?) The Norse universe also has nine realms, and some of them correspond pretty well by name and nature to the levels of Wolfe's world and some do not.

The ones that correspond well are in the middle. For example I have never seen a better description of the gods and what they are meant to be than I read in Wolfe's words about the Valfather, the Lady, and the other Overcyns. But the bits at the top and bottom of Wolfe's world are from other belief-structures and frankly they don't make as much sense in a Norse framework (no reason why they should, it's only a book).

According to Wolfe's own explanations the Giants are the cast-offs from Kleos, and their genesis in the realm of Skai was formed by the death of Ymir. So Setr is not a giant in this sense since he is in Muspel and is therefore of the residue of the residue of the residue of Skai - many layers of derivation below that. Maybe the spelling of Setr is just meant as acknowledgment of this. If it's more than that and a hint towards "Set" I have no suggestions.

James Wynn — 15 Jan 2005, 16:01 · in reply to Andy Robertson

I know that the restoration of the world after Ragnarok is part of the Eddas: I happen to believe, however, that it is a late Christian interpolation.

Hm. I'm not sure how this story makes Norse paganism more palatable to Christianity or vice versa. Well, maybe that part about the true god revealing himself, but nothing in the others. The world resets and continues much as it did before. That's hardly the Christian worldview.

Overcyns (what genuine word is that BTW?)

Good question. I think *maybe* I know, but don't know how to put it without seeming to contradict myself.

I think it is a derivation of "eormcn-cyn" which means "superhuman" or "huge one". This is not a contradiction of Wolfe's M.O. because he is not changing one obscure word for another. He is only translating one of part of the word because to convey the sense better and, anyway, how would English readers pronounce "eormcn"? But he's not *just changing* the word. http://penguin.pearson.swarthmore.edu/~scrist1/scanned_books/html/oi_cleasbyvigfusson/b0328.html

According to Wolfe's own explanations the Giants are the cast-offs from Kleos, and their genesis in the realm of Skai was formed by the death of

Ymir.

But IIRC the Norse worlds develop backwards from the way Wolfe's does. In other words, Middle Earth is formed from the fires of Muspelheim (thus Surturs indirect role, at least, in its creation).

~ Crush

mournings glory — 15 Jan 2005, 20:00 · in reply to Andrew Bollen

From: "Andrew Bollen" <abollen at internode.on.net>

Could have missed it, but haven't noticed anyone giving the place name definition of "Ormsby" courtesy of google: "Village of the Worm/Dragon". (The real Ormsby in northern England is apparently more likely to have been founded by a Viking named Orm, ie Dragon, apparently a common enough name for Vikings.)

"Art Ormsby" then translates to "Art from Dragonville".

At the end of _The Knight_ Able (since this is the only name we know him by) hears "a wind [soughing] among the treetops, chanting a thousand names. Among them, both of mine." But how does Ormsby (since Arthur must be the other name) fit in with Walewein, Wace, Vortigern, Kyot, Yvain, Gottfried, Eilhart, Palamedes, Duach, Tristan, Albrecht, and Caradoc? Is there anywhere in Arthurian literature a character named Ormsby? (This seems suggested by the pedigree/provenance of the listed names.) And who or what is actually chanting these various names? Surely, we're not meant to believe it's really the wind--unless it's the susurrus of Parka's bowstring.

msg

Dan Rabin — 15 Jan 2005, 21:10 · in reply to mournings glory

Perhaps "both of mine" refers to "Arthur" and "Able" rather than "Arthur" and "Ormsby".

-- Dan Rabin

At the end of _The Knight_ Able (since this is the only name we know him by) hears "a wind [soughing] among the treetops, chanting a thousand names. Among them, both of mine." But how does Ormsby (since Arthur must be the other name) fit in with Walewein, Wace, Vortigern, Kyot, Yvain, Gottfried, Eilhart, Palamedes, Duach, Tristan, Albrecht, and Caradoc? Is there anywhere in Arthurian literature a character named Ormsby? (This seems suggested by the pedigree/provenance of the listed names.) And who or what is actually chanting these various names? Surely, we're not meant to believe it's really the wind--unless it's the susurrus of Parka's bowstring.

msg

Andrew Bollen — 15 Jan 2005, 21:26 · in reply to mournings glory

At the end of _The Knight_ Able (since this is the only name we know him by) hears "a wind [soughing] among the treetops, chanting a thousand names. Among them, both of mine." But how does Ormsby (since Arthur must be the other name) fit in with Walewein, Wace, Vortigern, Kyot, Yvain, Gottfried, Eilhart, Palamedes, Duach, Tristan, Albrecht, and Caradoc? Is there

anywhere in Arthurian literature a character named Ormsby? (This seems suggested by the pedigree/provenance of the listed names.) And who or what is actually chanting these various names? Surely, we're not meant to believe it's really the wind--unless it's the susurrus of Parka's bowstring.

msg

My guess is that by "both of mine" he means "both my name here, and my name in America". So Arthur and Able.

Doesn't somebody somewhere compare the voice of the Valfather to the wind in the trees? Maybe Idnn when she meets him?

mournings glory — 15 Jan 2005, 22:29 · in reply to Andrew Bollen

Mr Bollen, seconding Mr. Rabin's post, writes:

My guess is that by "both of mine" he means "both my name here, and my name in America". So Arthur and Able.

But we already know the narrator's being called Able, so why conceal it? And how does "Able" connect with the other names mentioned, which all seem to be somehow associated with Arthuriana? As the brilliant Mr Arimani has earlier noted, the name Arthur is deducible from various clues (he's also right, I believe, about the structure of *The Wizard Knight* being circular, which is why *The Wizard* [note its placement in the overall series title] should almost be read first). What I'm trying to ascertain is if the name Ormsby is similarly deducible, and if so, how.

Also, was anyone else bothered by Gary Wolfe's boneheaded revelation of Able's real name in the first paragraph of his Locus review? Gene Wolfe thought it important enough not to reveal it until the very last two words of the series, so obviously he did not want it disclosed any earlier; and yet this is exactly what Dr. Wolfe does. A pox on all reviewers who fail to provide spoiler warnings!

I have a couple of weeks before I mail in my Hugo nominations, but wonder how the WorldCon administrators will treat Wolfe's latest two books: as separate novels or a single book. Anybody out there know?

msg

Otium sine litteris mors est.

Andrew Bollen — 16 Jan 2005, 04:20 · in reply to mournings glory

Mounrings Glory writes:

But we already know the narrator's being called Able, so why conceal it?
And how does "Able" connect with the other names mentioned, which all seem to be somehow associated with Arthuriana?

As to the first question, Art's not concealing anything. He's writing to Ben, remember, who knows both names.

As to th second - dunno!

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Jan 2005, 09:43 · in reply to Andrew Bollen

On Sun, 16 Jan 2005 00:28:59 +1030, Andrew Bollen

<abollen at internode.on.net> wrote:

Could have missed it, but haven't noticed anyone giving the place name definition of "Ormsby" courtesy of google: "Village of the Worm/Dragon".

Well, I pointed out a while back that "Ormsby" can be read as "of the Dragon," i.e., Pendragon.

--Dan'l

www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer

Freedom has no barcode.

--J.G. Ballard