

Astral travel in time

The Urth list — 6 messages, 5 voices, 06 Apr 2006

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4561>

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.

Roy C. Lackey — 06 Apr 2006, 19:18

Dan'I quoted and wrote:

I agree with Andrew in that I see no evidence in the text to suggest that astral travel also involves time travel.

This is given to us during the storytelling context. The Narrator travels into at least two peoples' stories that have already happened -- and at least one of them is quite surprised at it, in a way that shows that she perceives that her own past has been changed.

I took the apparent changes in the inhuma's story to be the product of Silkhorn's seeming ability, while awake, to influence her storytelling, not that he was actually able to change the past, whether he did it unconsciously or deliberately. To accord Silkhorn the ability to change the past, as Andrew has already suggested, opens up a Pandora's box that, once opened, not only can't be closed again, but potentially lets out more possibilities than the box could ever have held to begin with. Where does Silkhorn's power to change the past come from, and where does it stop? Why shouldn't he go back in the past to change any number of outcomes he didn't like, things that were a lot more important to him and the other humans who came to the Blue-Green system than the particular inhuma sitting at the table?

If Silkhorn has the power to change the past, then almost anything becomes possible, there are no logical rules and we might as well be trying to find meaning in nonsense rhymes.

I can't explain the appearance of the Silk-like and Oreb-like figures in the old woman's story, but if Silkhorn traveled back in time to spook somebody, he not only did it off-stage, he exercised his power, in my opinion, rather trivially and arbitrarily.

-Roy

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 06 Apr 2006, 20:01 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

To accord Silkhorn the ability to change the past, as Andrew has already suggested, opens up a Pandora's box that, once opened, not only can't be closed again, but potentially lets out more possibilities than the box could ever have held to begin with. Where does Silkhorn's power to change the past come from, and where does it stop?

Okay, to begin with, it probably isn't "his" power, but that of the Outsider, Whom he serves. I doubt he even knows he does it. (The Narrator is brain-numbingly good at not knowing stuff about himself: not so much an unreliable narrator as an unreliable observer.)

Why shouldn't he go back in the past to change any number of outcomes he didn't like, things that were a lot more important to him and the other humans who came to the Blue-Green system than the particular inhuma sitting at the table?

I have no doubt that he would if he (knew he) could. However, this is not the Outsider's focus. The Outsider (Who is the Christian God) is interested in individuals, souls, not mass movements.

I can't explain the appearance of the Silk-like and Oreb-like figures in the old woman's story, but if Silkhorn traveled back in time to spook somebody, he not only did it off-stage, he exercised his power, in my opinion, rather trivially and arbitrarily.

If he did it of his own volition - yes. If the Outsider/Increate/God did, however, then it has some extremely important meaning in the lives of the participants -- to which the Narrator is probably not privy.

--Dan'l

I do not fear Satan half so much as I fear those who fear him.

-- St Teresa of Avila

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

nastler — 07 Apr 2006, 06:42 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Couldn't Silkhorn's power here be described as changing the memory of an event (inserting a new memory) through story-telling, rather than to really change the past? Wouldn't this have the same (desired) effect? To alter the subjects future?

This would mean the past stays the past, now is now, and the future (or one version of it) is yet unwritten, but is influenced by our perception of (not the reality of) past events. This in no way explains the (instant) AT though. Unless SH is attempting to use his power on us (readers of SS) to alter our memory of what happened ten books ago.

And Dan, if SH is just a puppet then the only fun I could have reading about him would be to find the strings. These books have lots of strings, and not many of them go up to Heaven.

nastler

--- Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danlido at gmail.com> skrev:

To accord Silkhorn the ability to change the past, as Andrew has already suggested, opens up a Pandora's box that, once opened, not only can't be closed again, but potentially lets out more possibilities than the box could ever have held to begin with. Where does Silkhorn's power to change the past come from, and where does it stop?

Okay, to begin with, it probably isn't "his" power, but that of the Outsider, Whom he serves. I doubt he even knows he does it.(The Narrator is brain-numbingly good at not knowing stuff about himself:

not so much an unreliable narrator as an unreliable observer.)

Why shouldn't he go back in the past to change any number of outcomes he didn't like, things that were a lot more important to him and the other humans who came to the Blue-Green system than the particular inhuman sitting at the table?

I have no doubt that he would if he (knew he) could. However, this is not the Outsider's focus. The Outsider (Who is the Christian God) is interested in individuals, souls, not mass movements.

I can't explain the appearance of the Silk-like and Oreb-like figures in the old woman's story, but if Silkhorn traveled back in time to spook somebody, he not only did it off-stage, he exercised his power, in my opinion, rather trivially and arbitrarily.

If he did it of his own volition - yes. If the Outsider/Increate/God did, however, then it has some extremely important meaning in the lives of the participants -- to which the Narrator is probably not privy.

--Dan'l

--

I do not fear Satan half so much as I fear those who fear him.

-- St Teresa of Avila

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

David Duffy — 07 Apr 2006, 07:19 · in reply to nastler

On Fri, 7 Apr 2006, nastler wrote:

Couldn't Silkhorn's power here be described as changing the memory of an event (inserting a new memory) through story-telling, rather than to really change the past? Wouldn't this have the same (desired) effect? To alter the subjects future?

This would mean the past stays the past, now is now, and the future (or one version of it) is yet unwritten, but is influenced by our perception of (not the reality of) past events. This in no way explains the (instant) AT though. Unless SH is attempting to use his power on us (readers of SS) to alter our memory of what happened ten books ago.

nastler

Hey, this is the conceit of Mitchell's Cloud Atlas.

David Duffy

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 07 Apr 2006, 09:53 · follows David Duffy

On Fri, 07 Apr 2006 06:01:15 +1000 Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

<danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

To accord Silkhorn the ability to change the past, as Andrew has already suggested, opens up a Pandora's box that, once opened, not only can't be closed again, but potentially lets out more possibilities than the box could ever have held to begin with.

Where does

Silkhorn's power to change the past come from, and where does it stop?

Okay, to begin with, it probably isn't "his" power, but that of the

Outsider, Whom he serves. I doubt he even knows he does it.

Just in the context of SilkHorn & Sev, my Big Hypothesis is really based on Sev's "iterative" world-line, not on any specifically SilkHornian past-changing ability.

In the New Sun context, the Sev we know has been constructed by the Hierogrammates or whoever by layering different histories on top of each other (at least two histories, anyway). Or if not layering, then replacing one history by another - but I like the layering image better, partly I guess because you see the same mechanism in Free Live Free.

My hypothesis is that SilkHorn astral-travelling to Urth launches a new future Sev world-line, perhaps radically different to the one in New Sun. The instigator of the change is no doubt the Outsider/Increate, intervening with SilkHorn as his agent.

Totally making up stories: Perhaps the Increate also finds the eternal Hiero/human reproductive cycle distasteful, and from now on it will be replaced by something different - perhaps no longer a succession of universes, but just one, with a definite end. Etc etc etc. (Why he let things get out of hand in the first place - dunno!)

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 07 Apr 2006, 18:10 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

On 4/7/06, thalassocrat at nym.hush.com <thalassocrat at nym.hush.com> wrote:

In the New Sun context, the Sev we know has been constructed by the Hierogrammates or whoever by layering different histories on top of each other (at least two histories, anyway). Or if not layering, then replacing one history by another - but I like the layering image better, partly I guess because you see the same mechanism in Free Live Free.

I also think "layering" is the right term. I don't know whether Wolfe actually believes this or not, but these books seem to suggest something I have long thought possible -- that God is an artist who revises His work as He goes along.

The analogy I use is Tolkien writing The Lord of the Rings. When he first got the Hobbits to Bree, they found there an odd, weatherworn Hobbit named "Trotter." Nobody was more surprised than Tolkien when "Trotter" turned out not to be a Hobbit at all, but Aragorn.

I suspect that this is something like what it's like to create a world that contains creatures with free will. They come up with stuff you had never expected and you wind up revising the world to fit it better. And sometimes this revision leaves behind artifacts of the earlier versions. (Thus Severian's awareness that there were other versions of him before.)

My hypothesis is that SilkHorn astral-travelling to Urth launches a new future Sev world-line, perhaps radically different to the one in New Sun. The instigator of the change is no doubt the Outsider/Increate, intervening with SilkHorn as his agent.

Yes, that is precisely what I think also -- though, as noted, it could also be argued that the O/I used the Narrator to make Severian what he would become in NS.

(Side point: an alternate explanation for the inconsistencies ... one that wouldn't involve wiping out the NS. We know that Severian the Memorious nonetheless suppresses certain things and lies about others. Perhaps there was something in the encounter with the Narrator that he finds very threatening ... perhaps even something that might give him a presentiment of his destiny?)

--Dan'I

I do not fear Satan half so much as I fear those who fear him.
-- St Teresa of Avila
<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>