

Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

The Urth list — 36 messages, 12 voices, 12 Jan 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5534>

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.

Tom Hopkins — 12 Jan 2010, 15:32

One of the main problems I have difficulty understanding is why Wolfe felt the need to include Severian in the Short Sun books. I am unclear on whether this is meant to be the Severian of the New Sun books, or his first iteration or maybe another. I find I am reluctant to accept that Severian did not include SilkHorn in the books because no one would believe him as he states, because Severian includes many wild adventures which seem even less likely. Also I think it creates an inconsistency with Merryn appearing in the New Sun book, surely they would recognise each other to a greater extent and I can't imagine Severian neglecting to mention something in that regard in the narrative; especially as he mentions another brief meeting between them as a child.

In my mind it simply does not seem to add up, and I am convinced there is something I am missing which makes for a more feasible explanation. As at the moment it comes across to me as shoddy and unneeded yet I feel this must be a fault with my own understanding of the text, rather than Wolfe's work.

So I'd greatly appreciate any thoughts of theories on the matter, even if it happens to be it is the Severian from New Sun and he just fails to mention SilkHorn.

brunians at brunians.org — 12 Jan 2010, 15:38 · in reply to Tom Hopkins

He hadn't planned it out, Tom.

When he wrote the New Sun he had no idea there was going to be a Short Sun.

.

One of the main problems I have difficulty understanding is why Wolfe felt the need to include Severian in the Short Sun books. I am unclear on whether this is meant to be the Severian of the New Sun books, or his first iteration or maybe another. I find I am reluctant to accept that Severian did not include SilkHorn in the books because no one would believe him as he states, because Severian includes many wild adventures which seem even less likely. Also I think it creates an inconsistency with Merryn appearing in the New Sun book, surely they would recognise each other to a greater extent and I can't imagine Severian neglecting to mention something in that regard in the narrative; especially as he mentions another brief meeting between them as a

child.

In my mind It simply does not seem to add up, and I am convinced there is something I am missing which makes for a more feasible explanation. As at the moment it comes across to me as shoddy and unneeded yet I feel this must be a fault with my own understanding of the text, rather than Wolfe's work.

So I'd greatly appreciate any thoughts or theories on the matter, even if it happens to be it is the Severian from New Sun and he just fails to mention SilkHorn.

Got a cool Hotmail story? Tell us now
<http://clk.atdmt.com/UKM/go/195013117/direct/01/>

Tom Hopkins — 12 Jan 2010, 15:47 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

Sorry If I wasn't clear but I was more asking why he felt the need to add him to the Short Sun books in the first place? As it goes it seems to me to be one of the worst ways to include him in the narrative, as it is in a way that comes close to contradicting the text of the New Sun; and then too explain it all away by saying he neglected to mention it, is either very shoddy writing, (which I highly doubt in Wolfe's case) or something more.

Date: Tue, 12 Jan 2010 10:38:50 -0500
From: brunians at brunians.org
To: urth at lists.urth.net
CC: urth at urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

He hadn't planned it out, Tom.

When he wrote the New Sun he had no idea there was going to be a Short Sun.

.

One of the main problems I have difficulty understanding is why Wolfe felt the need to include Severian in the Short Sun books. I am unclear on whether this is meant to be the Severian of the New Sun books, or his first iteration or maybe another. I find I am reluctant to accept that Severian did not include SilkHorn in the books because no one would believe him as he states, because Severian includes many wild adventures which seem even less likely. Also I think it creates an inconsistency with Merryn appearing in the New Sun book, surely they would recognise each other to a greater extent

and I
can't imagine Severian neglecting to mention something in that regard in
the
narrative; especially as he mentions another brief meeting between them as
a
child.

In my mind It simply does not seem to add up, and I am convinced there is
something I am missing which makes for a more feasible explanation. As at
the
moment it comes across to me as shoddy and unneeded yet I feel this must
be a
fault with my own understanding of the text, rather than Wolfe's work.

So I'd greatly appreciate any thoughts of theories on the matter, even If
it
happens to be it is the Severian from New Sun and he just fails to mention
SilkHorn.

Got a cool Hotmail story? Tell us now

<http://clk.atdmt.com/UKM/go/195013117/direct/01/>

brunians at brunians.org — 12 Jan 2010, 16:10 · in reply to Tom Hopkins

He's making you think, isn't he?

.
Sorry If I wasn't clear but I was more asking why he felt
the need to add him to the Short Sun books in the first place? As it goes
it
seems to me to be one of the worst ways to include him in the narrative,
as it
is in a way that comes close to contradicting the text of the New Sun; and
then
too explain it all away by saying he neglected to mention it, is either
very
shoddy writing, (which I highly doubt in Wolfe's case) or something more.

Date: Tue, 12 Jan 2010 10:38:50 -0500

From: brunians at brunians.org

To: urth at lists.urth.net

CC: urth at urth.net

Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

He hadn't planned it out, Tom.

When he wrote the New Sun he had no idea there was going to be a Short
Sun.

.

One of the main problems I have difficulty understanding is why Wolfe felt the need to include Severian in the Short Sun books. I am unclear on whether this is meant to be the Severian of the New Sun books, or his first iteration or maybe another. I find I am reluctant to accept that Severian did not include SilkHorn in the books because no one would believe him as he states, because Severian includes many wild adventures which seem even less likely. Also I think it creates an inconsistency with Merryn appearing in the New Sun book, surely they would recognise each other to a greater extent and I can't imagine Severian neglecting to mention something in that regard in the narrative; especially as he mentions another brief meeting between them as a child.

In my mind It simply does not seem to add up, and I am convinced there is something I am missing which makes for a more feasible explanation. As at the moment it comes across to me as shoddy and unneeded yet I feel this must be a fault with my own understanding of the text, rather than Wolfe's work.

So I'd greatly appreciate any thoughts of theories on the matter, even if it happens to be it is the Severian from New Sun and he just fails to mention SilkHorn.

Got a cool Hotmail story? Tell us now
<http://clk.atdmt.com/UKM/go/195013117/direct/01/>

Jeff Wilson — 12 Jan 2010, 17:00 · in reply to Tom Hopkins

On 1/12/2010 9:47 AM, Tom Hopkins wrote:
Sorry If I wasn't clear but I was more asking why he felt the need to

add him to the Short Sun books in the first place? As it goes it seems to me to be one of the worst ways to include him in the narrative, as it is in a way that comes close to contradicting the text of the New Sun; and then too explain it all away by saying he neglected to mention it, is either very shoddy writing, (which I highly doubt in Wolfe's case) or something more.

There is some precedent in that Wolfe began to say that he considers Urth to be in a previous universal cycle to ours, despite allowing the high-universal text-based perception that it simply follows our particular age in history to stand unchallenged for years; at least, this is my impression, if someone else knows of some statement of Wolfe's in the interim, please speak up!

It seems likely to me that this is because it slipped his mind until then that the drowning of Urth otherwise belies G-d's promise to Noah to never again destroy the world by water.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
IEEE Student Chapter Blog at
< <http://ieeetamut.org> >

Jerry Friedman — 12 Jan 2010, 18:06 · in reply to Tom Hopkins

--- On Tue, 1/12/10, Tom Hopkins <topkins at hotmail.co.uk> wrote:

I agree completely. Wolfe said that astral projection made the possibility of Silkhorn's meeting Severian a "gun on the wall", but I've felt since I first read the passage that the gun would have been better left unfired.

In addition to your criticisms, I have a superficial one: I was disappointed to read that torturers' cloaks have red linings.

Yes, Josh, it made me think, but not in any way that helped me enjoy the book.

Jerry Friedman

Sorry If I wasn't clear but I was more asking why he felt the need to add him to the Short Sun books in the first place? As it goes it seems to me to be one of the worst ways to include him in the narrative, as it is in a way that comes close to contradicting the text of the New Sun; and then too explain it all away by saying he neglected to mention it, is either very shoddy writing, (which I highly doubt in Wolfe's case) or something more.

Date: Tue, 12 Jan 2010 10:38:50 -0500
From: brunians at brunians.org
To: urth at lists.urth.net
CC: urth at urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

He hadn't planned it out, Tom.

When he wrote the New Sun he had no idea there was going to be a Short Sun.

.

One of the main problems I have difficulty understanding is why Wolfe felt the need to include Severian in the Short Sun books. I am unclear on whether this is meant to be the Severian of the New Sun books, or his first iteration or maybe another. I find I am reluctant to accept that Severian did not include SilkHorn in the books because no one would believe him as he states, because Severian includes many wild adventures which seem even less likely. Also I think it creates an inconsistency with Merryn appearing in the New Sun book, surely they would recognise each other to a greater extent and I can't imagine Severian neglecting to mention something in that regard in the narrative; especially as he mentions another brief meeting between them as a child.

In my mind It simply does not seem to add up, and I am convinced there is something I am missing which makes for a more feasible explanation. As at the moment it comes across to me as shoddy and unneeded yet I feel this must be a fault with my own understanding of the text, rather than Wolfe's work.

So I'd greatly appreciate any thoughts of theories on the matter, even if it happens to be it is the Severian from New Sun and he just fails to mention SilkHorn.

Tom Hopkins — 12 Jan 2010, 18:47 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

I think in some ways it could create some interesting possibilities. If it really is the Severian from New Sun he meets, then could it not possible mean everything from Silks initial enlightenment to his gaining the power of astral projection were simply given to him so he could influence Severian into bringing the New Sun? We already know that the Severian we know has multiple people who meddle in his timeline to help him bring the New Sun, what's one more?

But the main problem I have is that he doesn't mention meeting SilkHorn in New Sun, which I'm certain he would do. For someone who claims to never forget to not record something that important to his life, something that inspired the recording of his life's work would surely feature heavily in his musing. As we so often see Severian contemplate a range of ideas, I feel there can be no way he would leave it out, as seeing an image of a seeming holy man who can shift the world around him would surely play into his deepening consideration of the Increate.

Basically it is my view that the Severian included in Short Sun cannot be the same Severian in New Sun, or rather the same iteration of him; even if it does heavily hint that it is. I'm sure some could argue that it could be related to Severian saying in New Sun about how he thought he might be insane, but because multiple people saw SilkHorn and surely the consequences of his actions would have been widespread, It seems unlikely that Severian could attribute his appearance to his sanity.

The whole meeting between SilkHorn and Severian seems off to me; lots of little things which are not the way they should be. The fact of Severian and Merryn which I mentioned earlier, and that she even says, "He is my brother," and does then go onto clarify that she meant about the relationship between the torturers and the witches. But after all these years of theories concerning who Severians sister is, and so little hints, would Gene Wolfe who is renowned for his tricky writing say something as crass as that? For me that seems far too obvious, so therefore must be misdirection, but to what purpose I'm unsure.

Date: Tue, 12 Jan 2010 10:06:38 -0800
From: jerry_friedman at yahoo.com
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

--- On Tue, 1/12/10, Tom Hopkins <topkins at hotmail.co.uk> wrote:

I agree completely. Wolfe said that astral projection made the possibility of Silkhorn's meeting Severian a "gun on the wall", but I've felt since I first read the passage that the gun would have been better left unfired.

In addition to your criticisms, I have a superficial one: I was disappointed to read that torturers' cloaks have red linings.

Yes, Josh, it made me think, but not in any way that helped me enjoy the book.

Jerry Friedman

Sorry If I wasn't clear but I was more asking why he felt the need to add him to the Short Sun books in the first

place? As it goes it seems to me to be one of the worst ways to include him in the narrative, as it is in a way that comes close to contradicting the text of the New Sun; and then too explain it all away by saying he neglected to mention it, is either very shoddy writing, (which I highly doubt in Wolfe's case) or something more.

Date: Tue, 12 Jan 2010 10:38:50 -0500
From: brunians at brunians.org
To: urth at lists.urth.net
CC: urth at urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

He hadn't planned it out, Tom.

When he wrote the New Sun he had no idea there was going to be a Short Sun.

.

One of the main problems I have difficulty understanding is why Wolfe felt the need to include Severian in the Short Sun books. I am unclear on whether this is meant to be the Severian of the New Sun books, or his first iteration or maybe another. I find I am reluctant to accept that Severian did not include SilkHorn in the books because no one would believe him as he states, because Severian includes many wild adventures which seem even less likely. Also I think it creates an inconsistency with Merryn appearing in the New Sun book, surely they would recognise each other to a greater extent and I can't imagine Severian neglecting to mention something in that regard in the narrative; especially as he mentions another brief meeting between them as a child.

In my mind It simply does not seem to add up, and

I am convinced there is something I am missing which makes for a more feasible explanation. As at the moment it comes across to me as shoddy and unneeded yet I feel this must be a fault with my own understanding of the text, rather than Wolfe's work.

So I'd greatly appreciate any thoughts of theories on the matter, even if it happens to be it is the Severian from New Sun and he just fails to mention SilkHorn.

Matthew Keeley — 12 Jan 2010, 19:12 · in reply to Tom Hopkins

Severian's a generally dishonest and unreliable narrator, but he does tell SilkHorn that he won't ever tell of their meeting. As Sev probably doesn't completely understand how much SilkHorn influenced him, he feels no need to break the "promise" he made in his casual statement. In New Sun, Sev acknowledges that he has broken many promises, but that doesn't mean that he likes breaking them. I could see him taking some satisfaction in not writing about SilkHorn.

And surely Severian encounters all kinds of fascinating things that he doesn't tell us about. His life as autarch was doubtless fascinating, but we don't hear too many details about things he did as ruler, his courtship of his wife, etc. Other things Severian just doesn't feel like writing about, i.e. most of the executions and excruciations he's paid to perform.

But yes, one does wish Sev had mentioned SilkHorn. Or that Wolfe had translated a manuscript with curious gaps and missing pages.

-Matt

brunians at brunians.org — 12 Jan 2010, 19:20 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

Unreliable, certainly, but dishonest? I don't think he is particularly dishonest. When does he actually lie?

Severian's a generally dishonest and unreliable narrator, but he does tell SilkHorn that he won't ever tell of their meeting. As Sev probably doesn't completely understand how much SilkHorn influenced him, he feels no need to break the "promise" he made in his casual statement. In New Sun, Sev acknowledges that he has broken many promises, but that doesn't mean that he likes breaking them. I could see him taking some satisfaction in not writing about SilkHorn.

And surely Severian encounters all kinds of fascinating things that he

doesn't tell us about. His life as autarch was doubtless fascinating, but we don't hear too many details about things he did as ruler, his courtship of his wife, etc. Other things Severian just doesn't feel like writing about, i.e. most of the executions and excruciations he's paid to perform.

But yes, one does wish Sev had mentioned SilkHorn. Or that Wolfe had translated a manuscript with curious gaps and missing pages.

-Matt

David Stockhoff — 12 Jan 2010, 19:44 · follows brunians at brunians.org

First, apologies for posting the entire digest last time!

I too had some trouble with that episode. But I'd respond with 2 comments:

(1) Why would Silk/Horn be part of Severian's story of his rise to the throne/ascent to godhood? That is after all the rhetorical thrust of his narrative. Random meetings with gods and ghosts that he may not even understand would not necessarily belong in it. And if he already believes in such beings, why would he even comment?

(2) Wolfe plainly wrote Urth to fill in gaps and make Book more accessible---he states this somewhere. With Merryn, I'd guess he wanted to tie up another loose end as well as clarify that Short Sun is in the same cycle as New Sun. Pretty mundane but important motives.

Message: 6

Date: Tue, 12 Jan 2010 18:47:17 +0000

From: Tom Hopkins <topkins at hotmail.co.uk>

To: <urth at lists.urth.net>

Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

Message-ID: <COL121-W21C82D8C3C08B5E41FE5DBE66C0 at phx.gbl>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="windows-1252"

I think in some ways it could create some interesting possibilities. If it really is the Severian from New Sun he meets, then could it not possible mean everything from Silks initial enlightenment to his gaining the power of astral projection were simply given to him so he could influence Severian into bringing the New Sun? We already know that the Severian we know has multiple people who meddle in his timeline to help him bring the New Sun, what's one more?

But the main problem I have is that he doesn't mention meeting SilkHorn in New Sun, which I'm certain he would do. For someone who claims to never forget to not record something that important to his life, something that inspired the recording of his life's work would surely feature heavily in his musing. As we so often see Severian contemplate a range of ideas, I feel there can be no way he would leave it out, as seeing an image of a seeming holy man who can shift the world around him would surely play into his deepening consideration of the Increate.

Basically it is my view that the Severian included in Short Sun cannot be the same Severian in New Sun, or rather the same iteration of him; even if it does heavily hint that it is. I'm sure some could argue that it could be related to Severian saying in New Sun about how he thought he might be insane, but because multiple people saw SilkHorn and surely the consequences of his actions would have been widespread, it seems unlikely that Severian could attribute his appearance to his sanity.

The whole meeting between SilkHorn and Severian seems off to me; lots of little things which are not the way they should be. The fact of Severian and Merryn which I mentioned earlier, and that she even says, "He is my brother," and does then go onto clarify that she meant about the relationship between the torturers and the witches. But after all these years of theories concerning who Severian's sister is, and so little hints, would Gene Wolfe who is renowned for his tricky writing say something as crass as that? For me that seems far too obvious, so therefore must be misdirection, but to what purpose I'm unsure.

Dave Tallman — 12 Jan 2010, 23:52 · follows David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote:

Why would Silk/Horn be part of Severian's story of his rise to the throne/ascent to godhood?

Isn't he a significant part of the story? Nobody has mentioned that Silk/Horn is identified by Severian as Malrubius. Indeed, the aquastor Malrubius of the BOTNS is probably strongly influenced by the memories of Silk/Horn as opposed to what the man himself was like. If Severian made no distinction between them, his promise to write nothing about Silk/Horn was a lie, as we would expect from him.

But the Severian seen in BOTSS is probably an earlier iteration of the Severian who wrote BOTNS. Inconsistencies abound:

- 1) He keeps Triskele longer in BOTSS (into Spring).
- 2) He knows Merryn better and earlier.
- 3) His ambitions are better-defined at a young age (to become a guild head, and to write).

There would seem to be many iterations on the way to building the Severian who can bring the New Sun. This one needed the early influence of Silk/Horn, and the next iterations will also (possibly replaced with an aquastor all the way through).

Tom Hopkins — 13 Jan 2010, 00:25 · in reply to Dave Tallman

I always

thought that Severian merely said he was not going to write about SilkHorn rather than promise it?

Also if we agree this is a previous iteration, surely that would mean that in our New Sun timeline something must happen to Silk or SilkHorn to prevent him from contacting Severian?

I think one possible option is that in this iteration the Outsider does not enlighten Silk, however seeing as he acts as a more "Godly" presence, I don't think he would have made the mistake of enlightening Silk if it was the wrong decision.

I propose it's more likely to do with the Mother figure or an agent of hers (Sea Wrack), she

would have ample opportunity to dispatch of Horn on his initial journey or even when he returns as SilkHorn. As the motivations concerning the brides of Albaia are ambiguous and vague I don't see this as too unlikely an explanation if they feel the New Sun would benefit them.

However it does raise the question that in doing so, they would be rebelling against the will of the Outsider himself. If he sent Silk (initially by the enlightenment) to contact Severian (If we deem this an alternate Severian who does not bring the New Sun due to the inconsistencies David Stockhoff mentioned) then either his mission was to prevent the bringing of the New Sun which seems unlikely, or he is fallible which seems equally unlikely. So I'm not sure if that is the correct theory after all.

Unless

this was the creation of the First Severian who is created in such a way as to influence the creation of the Second Severian (who would then succeed in bringing the New Sun). This then implies that whilst Severian 1 was not special to the Hierogrammates or any of the other parties in TBNS, (In the fact he was what caused them to realise his potential for "saving" Urth, and as such they then influenced Severian 2 as they saw fit) , but he was in fact special to the Outsider himself. By this I mean the Severian 1 was influenced in such a way by the Outsider, that the other parties would see his potential and therefore create Severian 2 who goes on to fulfil his mission. Sorry If I have presented this Idea poorly.

I believe

that's a viable explanation as long as we accept the Outsider is all knowing. It also requires the least interference from the Outsider himself (simply Silks enlightenment, and his possible resurrection in the tunnel later) as he manipulates the Hierogrammates and the other parties such as the Brides of Albaia to do the work for him.

Date: Tue, 12 Jan 2010 16:52:31 -0700

From: davetallman at msn.com

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

David Stockhoff wrote:

Why would Silk/Horn be part of Severian's story of his rise to the throne/ascent to godhood?

Isn't he a significant part of the story? Nobody has mentioned that Silk/Horn is identified by Severian as Malrubius. Indeed, the aquastor Malrubius of the BOTNS is probably strongly influenced by the memories of Silk/Horn as opposed to what the man himself was like. If Severian made no distinction between them, his promise to write nothing about Silk/Horn was a lie, as we would expect from him.

But the Severian seen in BOTSS is probably an earlier iteration of the Severian who wrote BOTNS. Inconsistencies abound:

- 1) He keeps Triskele longer in BOTSS (into Spring).
- 2) He knows Merryn better and earlier.

- 3) His ambitions are better-defined at a young age (to become a guild head, and to write).

There would seem to be many iterations on the way to building the Severian who can bring the New Sun. This one needed the early influence of Silk/Horn, and the next iterations will also (possibly replaced with an aquastor all the way through).

David Stockhoff — 13 Jan 2010, 00:37 · follows Tom Hopkins

Well that not only answers the question but obliterates it! Well done.

I didn't know Silk/Horn was Malrubius. Pray continue ...

Message: 1

Date: Tue, 12 Jan 2010 16:52:31 -0700

From: Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com>

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

Message-ID:

<1bf4dd41001121552r6d24fdf0n65b2c846980200dd at mail.gmail.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="iso-8859-1"

David Stockhoff wrote:

Why would Silk/Horn be part of Severian's story of his rise to the throne/ascent to godhood?

Isn't he a significant part of the story? Nobody has mentioned that Silk/Horn is identified by Severian as Malrubius. Indeed, the aquastor Malrubius of the BOTNS is probably strongly influenced by the memories of Silk/Horn as opposed to what the man himself was like. If Severian made no distinction between them, his promise to write nothing about Silk/Horn was a lie, as we would expect from him.

Dave Tallman — 14 Jan 2010, 07:08 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote:

I didn't know Silk/Horn was Malrubius. Pray continue ...

The name Malrubius occurs two times in TRTTW. The first time, Severian is talking to Silk/Horn during the jump from the trial; he refers to Master Malrubius as another person in the past tense, "Master Malrubius used to make a scribe come and help him twice a week" (p. 263). Since this was unpaid extorted service, we can assume that was the real man (probably deceased).

The second time, a big heavy man (probably Master Gurloes), is about to beat Severian and gets interrupted by Oreb calling "Watch out! Watch out!". When Gurloes questions why the bird is there, Severian says, "It belongs to Master Malrubius, Master." Then Silk comes up and puts his hand on the big man's shoulder, scaring him away -- reacting as if he had seen a ghost.

The astral appearance of Silk/Horn is different in the two cases. In the latter, he looks like Silk alone (the Horn soul-part seems to have died after the encounter with the real Scylla). The Silk-alone projection looks enough like Master Malrubius that Severian mistakes him for the ghost of Malrubius, I believe.

The intense goodness of this Silk projection influenced Severian, I think. It may be why there is an encounter in BOTNS where the aquastor Malrubius asks him about loyalty to God.

Why the similarity of appearance between Silk and Malrubius? Well, Silk is a from a genetically enhanced embryo, probably a clone of someone in Typhon's time. So might the real Master Malrubius have been.

Can we conclude from the presence of the enlightened/good Silk helping Severian that God is

on the side of bringing the New Sun, despite the destruction it caused? It would seem so. (The person who thought it was a second Noah's flood has completely misread the nature of the catastrophes brought by the New Sun -- land sinking in some areas, rising in others as a result of tidal forces, along with some ocean level rising due to icecaps melting).

James Wynn — 14 Jan 2010, 22:29 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Isn't he a significant part of the story? Nobody has mentioned that Silk/Horn is identified by Severian as Malrubius.

Severian thought the Rajan was Malrubius (Silk and Malrubius did both had eyesight issues), and Silk thought the Rajan was Patera Pike (IMO the description of events of the night "Pike's Ghost" appears leaves no other explanation).

A rather easy extrapolation on Don Dogget's "New Sun" Clones theory provides a ready explanation for these misidentifications.

FWIW
J.

Dave Tallman — 15 Jan 2010, 15:26 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:
Severian thought the Rajan was Malrubius (Silk and Malrubius did both had eyesight issues), and Silk thought the Rajan was Patera Pike (IMO the description of events of the night "Pike's Ghost" appears leaves no other explanation).

I absolutely agree about the explanation of the "ghost of Patera Pike," but Pike need not be another clone for this to work. Silk saw the older astral-projected Silk only briefly, under a single light at the top of the stairs, and from bottom to top as he came up the stairs. The calotte seems to have been eye-concealing under these lighting conditions. (Silk selected the calotte for his burglary at Blood's because it would "supply a certain concealment" even if his straw hat blew off).

James Wynn — 15 Jan 2010, 17:13 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Ehh...okay, but I'm not convinced.

Incidentally, understanding that the Rajan is time-traveling through Viron makes viable my personal opinion about the identity of Hyacinth's "father" (an employee at the Juzgado whom Silk mentions that he met with but whom never makes an "on-screen" appearance--even at the wedding). It was the Rajan again. Silk's mother wanted him to take that career path rather than the priesthood, and he himself muses that that he should have gone that way. So the Rajan takes advantage of dream-travel to finally realize that hope.

And that is why Wolfe played peak-a-boo with this apparently significant character.

J.

I absolutely agree about the explanation of the "ghost of Patera Pike," [it was the Rajan from the Short Sun] but Pike need not be another clone for this to work. Silk saw the older astral-projected Silk only briefly, under a single light at the top of the stairs, and from bottom to top as he came up the stairs. The calotte seems to have been eye-concealing under these lighting conditions. (Silk selected the calotte for his burglary at Blood's because it would "supply a certain

concealment" even if his straw hat blew off).

Charles Tallman — 15 Jan 2010, 17:56 · follows James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

Incidentally, understanding that the Rajan is time-traveling through Viron makes viable my personal opinion about the identity of Hyacinth's "father" (an employee at the Juzgado whom Silk mentions that he met with but whom never makes an "on-screen" appearance--even at the wedding). It was the Rajan again. Silk's mother wanted him to take that career path rather than the priesthood, and he himself muses that that he should have gone that way. So the Rajan takes advantage of dream-travel to finally realize that hope.

You mean to say that Silk/Horn was the father of the woman he loved and married? Not to mention the horrific bad parenting of sex-changing his son Hyacinthus and selling him to someone for a career advancement.

This is too squicky for me to contemplate, especially from the enlightened/good Silk.

John Watkins — 15 Jan 2010, 17:58 · in reply to Charles Tallman

I think (I hope) that James simply means that the Rajan is the person who identified himself as Hyacinth's father to Silk.

Not that the Rajan actually fathered Hyacinth.

On Fri, Jan 15, 2010 at 12:56 PM, Charles Tallman <rocketsunner at gmail.com> wrote:
James Wynn wrote:

Incidentally, understanding that the Rajan is time-traveling through Viron makes viable my personal opinion about the identity of Hyacinth's "father" (an employee at the Juzgado whom Silk mentions that he met with but whom never makes an "on-screen" appearance--even at the wedding). It was the Rajan again. Silk's mother wanted him to take that career path rather than the priesthood, and he himself muses that that he should have gone that way. So the Rajan takes advantage of dream-travel to finally realize that hope.

You mean to say that Silk/Horn was the father of the woman he loved and married? Not to mention the horrific bad parenting of sex-changing his son Hyacinthus and

selling him to someone for a career advancement.

This is too squicky for me to contemplate, especially from the enlightened/good Silk.

James Wynn — 15 Jan 2010, 18:53 · in reply to Charles Tallman

You mean to say that Silk/Horn was the father of the woman he loved and married? Not to mention the horrific bad parenting of sex-changing his son Hyacinthus and
selling him to someone for a career advancement.

This is too squicky for me to contemplate, especially from the enlightened/good Silk.

1) I don't equate the Rajan with Silk. Silk died. He slashed his wrists in front of Hyacinth's coffin. What's left of Silk is his body and his memory. For Horn, all that's left is the memory of his memories. The Rajan is in love with Seawrack, not Hyacinth.

2) I mean to say that the Rajan uses terms like "father", "daughter", etc. very loosely.

He referred to Jahlee as his sister and daughter.

He told Hide (or Hoof, can't remember now) that Jahlee was his sister or aunt.

Although I once postulated years ago on my first read that Hy might be a male chem, I have happily rejected even the possibility of that since then. It is true that Marc Aramini has postulated that Hy might be male, but I don't think so. There's very good reasons to draw those conclusions but there are better explanations, I think.

Everything we think we know about Hy's childhood comes from Chenille, who seems to know more than she lets on but I don't think she knows everything.

Let me offer an analogy. Remember when the Rajan and Jahlee and Hide (or Hoof) travelled to Urth, and Jahlee --an inhuman in her dream-travel, fully human body-- began wantonly coming on to the guard at the Torturer's keep? What do you suppose was the attitude of that guard to the Rajan? Whom he must have supposed was her father or at least her protector? Probably not so great. But he wasn't really her father in the way the guard thought and frankly there wasn't much to be done to control her anyway.

Chenille says Hy came to work for a commissioner to keep his kids ("eight or nine sprats I guess"). She sums things up with "and you know what happened then-she didn't have to work much". Even Chenille doesn't claim her father sold her as a prostitute. That's merely a conclusion the reader tends to draw. We don't know that it was "her father's" choice for her to take that job, and what the job turned into might as well have been all Hy's doing,

Strip out what we *think* Chenille is implying and what do we have?

* Hy took a job.

* The commissioner gave her "father" a job.

Now imagine all the ways that scenario could be reinterpreted.

We're left with an insufficiently attentive father. But if her father was the Rajan, then he almost certainly wasn't her "real" father, and the Rajan doesn't force anyone to do anything. He just advises.

J.

Dave Tallman — 16 Jan 2010, 00:16 · follows James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

Chenille says Hy came to work for a commissioner to keep his kids ("eight or nine sprats I guess").

The "eight or nine sprats" are actually Hyacinth's brothers and sisters. Here is the context. The commissioner said he wanted a maid, not a nanny. The interjection about sprats suggests why her father could spare her, and his desperation to have a better-paying job. It looks like a sale to me. And if this is the Rajan, what is his relationship to all these sprats?

"...One of the commissioners saw [Hyacinth] when she was maybe fourteen, and said, 'Listen, I need a maid. Send her up and she can live at my house'--they had eight or nine sprats, I guess--'and she can make a little money, too, and *you'll get a nice promotion.*' Hy's father was just a
regular clerk then, probably."

It's interesting that the name Hyacinth has triple ambiguity in the Viron naming system.

- 1) A type of plant (female)
- 2) A name for yellow zircon (chem)
- 3) A species of pigeon (male)

I go for transgendered male to female, for all the usual reasons (body looks like a boy, except for artificial breasts, tougher fighter than she looks) and also:

- 1) The mural in her room that alludes to several other greek males in relationships like Hyacynthus, without specifically naming him (emphasis of a clue by omission).
- 2) The gay Blood would find it amusing to tempt the city officials with a sex-changed boy.

brunians at brunians.org — 16 Jan 2010, 00:30 · in reply to Dave Tallman

In 2002, when I met Gene Wolfe, I mentioned the theory that was bouncing around the list at the time, that Hyacinth was a male chem.

He remarked that it was a good thing that he wasn't on the list.

.

James Wynn wrote:

Chenille says Hy came to work for a commissioner to keep his kids ("eight or nine sprats I guess").

The "eight or nine sprats" are actually Hyacinth's brothers and sisters. Here is the context. The commissioner said he wanted a maid, not a nanny. The interjection about sprats suggests why her father could spare her, and his desperation to have a better-paying job. It looks like a sale to me. And
if this is the Rajan, what is his relationship to all these sprats?

"...One of the commissioners saw [Hyacinth] when she was maybe fourteen, and
said, 'Listen, I need a maid. Send her up and she can live at my house'--they had eight or nine sprats, I guess--'and she can make a little money, too, and *you'll get a nice promotion.*' Hy's father was just a
regular clerk then, probably."

It's interesting that the name Hyacinth has triple ambiguity in the Viron naming system.

- 1) A type of plant (female)
- 2) A name for yellow zircon (chem)
- 3) A species of pigeon (male)

I go for transgendered male to female, for all the usual reasons (body looks like a boy, except for artificial breasts, tougher fighter than she looks) and also:

- 1) The mural in her room that alludes to several other greek males in relationships like Hyacynthus, without specifically naming him

(emphasis of a clue by omission).

2) The gay Blood would find it amusing to tempt the city officials with a sex-changed boy.

James Wynn — 16 Jan 2010, 04:08 · in reply to Dave Tallman

The "eight or nine sprats" are actually Hyacinth's brothers and sisters. Here is the context. The commissioner said he wanted a maid, not a nanny. The interjection about sprats suggests why her father could spare her, and his desperation to have a better-paying job. It looks like a sale to me. And if this is the Rajan, what is his relationship to all these sprats?

The number of sprats were the commissioner's. With 7 or 8 brothers and sisters, I would think one of them would make an appearance or at the very least get named. I admit the way Chenille put it is ambiguous, but it makes the narrative rather weird if Hy has lots of siblings. I mean, their sister married the Calde'. Don't you think they'd want to reconnect with her after that?

It's interesting that the name Hyacinth has triple ambiguity in the Viron naming system.

- 1) A type of plant (female)
- 2) A name for yellow zircon (chem)
- 3) A species of pigeon (male)

Yeah, I noted for some time that there was grist for arguing that she is female, male, and chem. So a male chem made sense to me once upon a time. Each of them has backing from more than the name. Mainly, though, they are all hints that there's something not quite right about her as a woman.

Here's another reference via name, though:

Hyacinth and Fava are both beans.

J.

James Wynn — 16 Jan 2010, 04:10 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

He's got no one to blame but himself.

In 2002, when I met Gene Wolfe, I mentioned the theory that was bouncing around the list at the time, that Hyacinth was a male chem.

He remarked that it was a good thing that he wasn't on the list.

Pedro Pereira — 16 Jan 2010, 11:47 · in reply to James Wynn

LOL

Date: Fri, 15 Jan 2010 22:10:46 -0600
From: crushtv at gmail.com
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

He's got no one to blame but himself.

In 2002, when I met Gene Wolfe, I mentioned the theory that was bouncing around the list at the time, that Hyacinth was a male chem.

He remarked that it was a good thing that he wasn't on the list.

Dave Tallman — 16 Jan 2010, 19:24 · follows Pedro Pereira

brunians wrote:

In 2002, when I met Gene Wolfe, I mentioned the theory that was bouncing around the list at the time, that Hyacinth was a male chem.

He remarked that it was a good thing that he wasn't on the list.

Of course, since "male chem" and "once male" are two entirely different things, this doesn't help prove or disprove the theory at all.

Dave Tallman — 16 Jan 2010, 19:49 · follows Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

1) The mural in her room that alludes to several other greek males in relationships like Hyacinthus, without specifically naming him (emphasis of a clue by omission).

I found the reference. It was actually twin icons of Ganymedia and Catamitus on either sides of the doors of the entrance to the wing where Hyacinth resided. Ganymede and Catamitus are the Greek and Roman names of the same minor god, a young boy who was taken by Zeus to be his beloved and the cupbearer to the gods. Hyacinthus was also a beautiful boy in Greek mythology, quarreled over by Apollo and the wind-god, which led to the boy dying and being made a demigod also.

brunians at brunians.org — 16 Jan 2010, 20:13 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Maybe for you, who was not there, it doesn't.

brunians wrote:

In 2002, when I met Gene Wolfe, I mentioned the theory that was bouncing around the list at the time, that Hyacinth was a male chem.

He remarked that it was a good thing that he wasn't on the list.

Of course, since "male chem" and "once male" are two entirely different things, this doesn't help prove or disprove the theory at all.

Craig Brewer — 16 Jan 2010, 20:51 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

Not to bring up the old "authorial fallacy" here, but if he wrote the books in such a way that they support the "male chem/once male" possibility in a way that doesn't contradict it and in fact makes it a compelling possibility, it doesn't matter what he said after the fact. Granted, we're talking about a potential plot point which is different than a reader's interpretation. But with a writing style that often works by indirection and suggestion, he runs the risk of this kind of thing getting out of his control. He may know how it all adds up in his head, but, as the rest of us know, there are *vastly* different readings of his books that are out there and that all claim to have "solved" various puzzles in jaw-droppingly idiosyncratic ways. If his books lend themselves to this kind of reaction, then I wonder if Wolfe is really always the best reader of Wolfe, if that

means we have to divine exactly what he thought in order to "get" the books. I mean, any book that requires the author to explain it or to verify things beyond the covers of the book seems like a failed book. I'd rather deal with the text than with what Wolfe thought it meant before (or even after) he published it. Once it's out there (barring a revision), the text is definitive, not Wolfe.

(And with that, I step down from an undergraduate-styled-podium-of-Foucault-ness...heh...)

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

From: "brunians at brunians.org" <brunians at brunians.org> To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net> Sent: Sat, January 16, 2010 2:13:18 PM Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

Maybe for you, who was not there, it doesn't.

.

brunians wrote:

In 2002, when I met Gene Wolfe, I mentioned the theory that was bouncing around the list at the time, that Hyacinth was a male chem.

He remarked that it was a good thing that he wasn't on the list.

Of course, since "male chem" and "once male" are two entirely different things, this doesn't help prove or disprove the theory at all.

Urth Mailing List

To post, write urth at urth.net

Subscription/information: <http://www.urth.net>

brunians at brunians.org — 16 Jan 2010, 21:32 · in reply to Craig Brewer

Gene Wolfe is not exactly homophobic; as far as I know, he loves the sinner and thinks that the sin is no worse than a lot of things hetro people get up to. There are many gay characters in his works, and they are often presented sympathetically. I do not, however, believe that Hyacinth is or was intended to be transgendered. I note that all of his gay characters (at least the ones I call to mind right now) have something seriously wrong with them, even if some of them are not actively evile.

I certainly intend to clarify this if I should meet him again.

.

Not to bring up the old "authorial fallacy" here, but if he wrote the books in such a way that they support the "male chem/once male" possibility in a way that doesn't contradict it and in fact makes it a compelling possibility, it doesn't matter what he said after the fact. Granted, we're talking about a potential plot point which is different than a reader's interpretation. But with a writing style that often works by indirection and suggestion, he runs the risk of this kind of thing getting out of his control. He may know how it all adds up in his head, but, as the rest of us know, there are *vastly* different readings of his books that are out there and that all claim to have "solved" various puzzles in jaw-droppingly idiosyncratic ways. If his books lend themselves to this kind of reaction, then I wonder if Wolfe is really always the best reader of Wolfe, if that means we have to divine exactly what he thought

in order to "get" the books. I mean, any book that requires the author to explain it or to verify things beyond the covers of the book seems like a failed book. I'd rather deal with the text than with what Wolfe thought it meant before (or even after) he published it. Once it's out there (barring a revision), the text is definitive, not Wolfe.

(And with that, I step down from an undergraduate-styled-podium-of-Foucault-ness...heh...)

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

From: "brunians at brunians.org" <brunians at brunians.org>

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

Sent: Sat, January 16, 2010 2:13:18 PM

Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

Maybe for you, who was not there, it doesn't.

.

brunians wrote:

In 2002, when I met Gene Wolfe, I mentioned the theory that was bouncing around the list at the time, that Hyacinth was a male chem.

He remarked that it was a good thing that he wasn't on the list.

Of course, since "male chem" and "once male" are two entirely different things, this doesn't help prove or disprove the theory at all.

John Watkins — 16 Jan 2010, 22:22 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

Whether or not Hyacinth is intended to be transgendered, there is clearly something "seriously wrong with" her.

On Sat, Jan 16, 2010 at 4:32 PM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:
Gene Wolfe is not exactly homophobic; as far as I know, he loves the sinner and thinks that the sin is no worse than a lot of things hetro people get up to. There are many gay characters in his works, and they are often presented sympathetically. I do not, however, believe that Hyacinth is or was intended to be transgendered. I note that all of his gay characters (at least the ones I call to mind right now) have something seriously wrong with them, even if some of them are not actively evile.

I certainly intend to clarify this if I should meet him again.

.

Not to bring up the old "authorial fallacy" here, but if he wrote the books in such a way that they support the "male chem/once male" possibility in a way that doesn't contradict it and in fact makes it a compelling possibility, it doesn't matter what he said after the fact. Granted, we're talking about a potential plot point which is different

than a reader's interpretation. But with a writing style that often works by indirection and suggestion, he runs the risk of this kind of thing getting out of his control. He may know how it all adds up in his head, but, as the rest of us know, there are **vastly** different readings of his books that are out there and that all claim to have "solved" various puzzles in jaw-droppingly idiosyncratic ways. If his books lend themselves to this kind of reaction, then I wonder if Wolfe is really always the best reader of Wolfe, if that means we have to divine exactly what he thought in order to "get" the books. I mean, any book that requires the author to explain it or to verify things beyond the covers of the book seems like a failed book. I'd rather deal with the text than with what Wolfe thought it meant before (or even after) he published it. Once it's out there (barring a revision), the text is definitive, not Wolfe.

(And with that, I step down from an undergraduate-styled-podium-of-Foucault-ness...heh...)

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

From: "brunians at brunians.org" <brunians at brunians.org>

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

Sent: Sat, January 16, 2010 2:13:18 PM

Subject: Re: (urth) Severians Later Appearance (Spoilers)

Maybe for you, who was not there, it doesn't.

.

brunians wrote:

In 2002, when I met Gene Wolfe, I mentioned the theory that was bouncing around the list at the time, that Hyacinth was a male chem.

He remarked that it was a good thing that he wasn't on the list.

Of course, since "male chem" and "once male" are two entirely different things, this doesn't help prove or disprove the theory at all.

brunians at brunians.org — 16 Jan 2010, 22:52 · in reply to John Watkins

Very well taken, John.

.

Whether or not Hyacinth is intended to be transgendered, there is clearly something "seriously wrong with" her.

On Sat, Jan 16, 2010 at 4:32 PM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

Gene Wolfe is not exactly homophobic; as far as I know, he loves the sinner and thinks that the sin is no worse than a lot of things hetro

people get up to. There are many gay characters in his works, and they are often presented sympathetically. I do not, however, believe that Hyacinth is or was intended to be transgendered. I note that all of his gay characters (at least the ones I call to mind right now) have something seriously wrong with them, even if some of them are not actively evil.

I certainly intend to clarify this if I should meet him again.

.

Not to bring up the old "authorial fallacy" here, but if he wrote the books in such a way that they support the "male chem/once male" possibility in a way that doesn't contradict it and in fact makes it a compelling possibility, it doesn't matter what he said after the fact. Granted, we're talking about a potential plot point which is different than a reader's interpretation. But with a writing style that often works by indirection and suggestion, he runs the risk of this kind of thing getting out of his control. He may know how it all adds up in his head, but, as the rest of us know, there are **vastly** different readings of his books that are out there and that all claim to have "solved" various puzzles in jaw-droppingly idiosyncratic ways. If his books lend themselves to this kind of reaction, then I wonder if Wolfe is really always the best reader of Wolfe, if that means we have to divine exactly what he thought in order to "get" the books. I mean, any book that requires the author to explain it or to verify things beyond the covers of the book seems like a failed book. I'd rather deal with the text than with what Wolfe thought it meant before (or even after) he published it. Once it's out there (barring a revision), the text is definitive, not Wolfe.

(And with that, I step down from an undergraduate-styled-podium-of-Foucault-ness...heh...)

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

From: "brunians at brunians.org" <brunians at brunians.org>

James Wynn — 18 Jan 2010, 04:09 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

There are many gay characters in his works, and they are often presented sympathetically. I do not, however, believe that Hyacinth is or was intended to be transgendered. I note that all of his gay characters (at least the ones I call to mind right now) have something seriously wrong with them, even if some of them are not actively evil. I certainly intend to clarify this if I should meet him again.

After banging together (what I believed to be) every conceivable theory of Hyacinth's "true" nature, I am now confident (as I implied) that she is Fava.

Those that only see in her a post-feminist character will not be impressed.

J.

James Wynn — 19 Jan 2010, 07:20 · in reply to Craig Brewer

Not to bring up the old "authorial fallacy" here, but if he wrote the books in such a way that they support the "male chem/once male" possibility in a way that doesn't contradict it and in fact makes it a compelling possibility, it doesn't matter what he said after the fact.

Yeah, but (for me) puzzling over Wolfe's stories is interesting because I believe there is a "right" answer. I don't think it matters to the basic plot of the story whether Hyacinth is a male chem or not (my old theory, not yours). Nor whether Incus is a woman or Tussah and Horn are clones of Typhon. These details only matter because we think they mattered to the author. When I decided that I would never be able to prove important details about An Evil Guest to *my own* satisfaction, I lost interest in trying to find the answers. But I still like the universe Wolfe imagined.

However, I suppose it is cheating to for Josh to declare the "transgendered" theory is dead because of a reaction that he *inferred* from Wolfe's response. Especially since his reaction was to *my* theory about Hy being a male chem (my attempt to pull all of --what I understood to be-- the loose threads together into one neat little explanation). I mean, the problem as I see it is that Josh doesn't need to counter with any evidence. He just says, "I heard Wolfe say something indeterminate and I divined this and that."

It reminds me of *some* of the resistance I faced on this list when I posited the "male chem" theory. One person said that Wolfe would never have a "moral exemplar" character involved in a homosexual relationship...even though a relationship with a transgendered male chem would not be homosexual or heterosexual since their sexes are strictly formal (or at least I thought so at the time). Nor would a man having sex with a "female" robot be any more or less perverse than doing it with a so-called "male" robot. And Wolfe did have a character have sex with a robot in "Counting Cats In Zanzibar". Anyway, it's frustrating to face that kind of resistance. At least, Josh's response was better than that. He made a serious attempt to check it out.

Still, "Hy is a transgendered male chem" is a pretty wild theory. But I didn't walk away from it because of Josh's report. I continued to roll it around in my mind with other theories for a long time like Captain Queeg and his ball bearings (it was fun) until I decided I had latched onto one that was solid enough to make all the others irrelevant. The thing is, I know that Gene misdirects about his stories all the time. He seems to enjoy dropping hints that don't mean what we often think they do. I remember when Marc Aramini reported that Wolfe had told him [in response to his "Blue Ushas" theory] "No, Urth is Green!". Then a short time later, Wolfe reportedly just sighed and said "I should just keep my mouth shut". Some people still like the Blue Ushas theory, even though Marc (last I heard) had discarded it because of what Wolfe told him. I don't think Urth is Green nor that the Short Sun is Sol even though I toyed for a good while after that with Blue being Verthandi (I even scoured a map of Mars looking for a mountain range that might qualify as Lizard Island).

I mean,
any book that requires the author to explain it or to
verify things beyond the covers of the book seems

like a failed book.

I would be the one most likely to agree with this in most cases, yet I don't in the case of Wolfe's novels. For example, consider Auk kidnapping Hyacinth. There's no way we would know emphatically why he had done that and why he let her go if Wolfe had not explained it. I had four or five possible explanations in mind for Tussah's prediction "The son not of my body shall be Calde after me." But it took an answer to a question posed to Wolfe for me to settle on one. Still, I find this 7 volume novel to be one of Wolfe's most satisfying. If Wolfe had not confirmed that Dorcas was Severian's grandmother, it would still be a highly controversial theory. Does that make The Book of the New Sun a failed work?

And in many cases the questions thought to be unresolvable merely haven't been considered with enough intensity. Many people seem to find the basic plot of "Peace" (How did everyone die? What's the deal with the guy slamming oranges against the big metal doors? etc?) to be inscrutable. But it was clear to me, the first time I read it--after I thought about it a few days.

Regards,

James,
The Absolute Lord of Unpopular Theories

brunians at brunians.org — 19 Jan 2010, 07:28 · in reply to James Wynn

BTW, James, you are exactly right that Wolfe said something indeterminate and that I assumed some on top of that. I still **think** I am correct in thinking that Hyacinth is genetically female, but I no longer believe that Wolfe confirmed that.

Should I meet him again I shall ask him in more detail.

.
Not to bring up the old "authorial fallacy" here, but if he wrote the books in such a way that they support the "male chem/once male" possibility in a way that doesn't contradict it and in fact makes it a compelling possibility, it doesn't matter what he said after the fact.

Yeah, but (for me) puzzling over Wolfe's stories is interesting because I believe there is a "right" answer. I don't think it matters to the basic plot of the story whether Hyacinth is a male chem or not (my old theory, not yours). Nor whether Incus is a woman or Tussah and Horn are clones of Typhon. These details only matter because we think they mattered to the author. When I decided that I would never be able to prove important details about An Evil Guest to **my own** satisfaction, I lost interest in trying to find the answers. But I still like the universe Wolfe imagined.

However, I suppose it is cheating to for Josh to declare the "transgendered" theory is dead because of a reaction that he **inferred** from Wolfe's response. Especially since his reaction was to **my** theory about Hy being a male chem (my attempt to pull all of --what I understood to be-- the loose threads together into one neat little explanation). I mean, the problem as I

see it is that Josh doesn't need to counter with any evidence. He just says,
"I heard Wolfe say something indeterminant and I divined this and that."

It reminds me of *some* of the resistance I faced on this list when I posited the "male chem" theory. One person said that Wolfe would never have a "moral exemplar" character involved in a homosexual relationship...even though a relationship with a transgendered male chem would not be homosexual or heterosexual since their sexes are strictly formal (or at least I thought so at the time). Nor would a man having sex with a "female" robot be any more or less perverse than doing it with a so-called "male" robot. And Wolfe did have a character have sex with a robot in "Counting Cats In Zanzibar". Anyway, it's frustrating to face that kind of resistance. At least, Josh's response was better than that. He made a serious attempt to check it out.

Still, "Hy is a transgendered male chem" is a pretty wild theory. But I didn't walk away from it because of Josh's report. I continued to roll it around in my mind with other theories for a long time like Captain Queeg and his ball bearings (it was fun) until I decided I had latched onto one that was solid enough to make all the others irrelevant. The thing is, I know that Gene misdirects about his stories all the time. He seems to enjoy dropping hints that don't mean what we often think they do. I remember when Marc Aramini reported that Wolfe had told him [in response to his "Blue Ushas" theory] "No, Urth is Green!". Then a short time later, Wolfe reportedly just sighed and said "I should just keep my mouth shut". Some people still like the Blue Ushas theory, even though Marc (last I heard) had discarded it because of what Wolfe told him. I don't think Urth is Green nor that the Short Sun is Sol even though I toyed for a good while after that with Blue being Verthandi (I even scoured a map of Mars looking for a mountain range that might qualify as Lizard Island).

I mean, any book that requires the author to explain it or to verify things beyond the covers of the book seems like a failed book.

I would be the one most likely to agree with this in most cases, yet I don't in the case of Wolfe's novels. For example, consider Auk kidnapping Hyacinth. There's no way we would know emphatically why he had done that and why he let her go if Wolfe had not explained it. I had four or five possible explanations in mind for Tussah's prediction "The son not of my body shall be Calde after me." But it took an answer to a question posed to Wolfe for me to settle on one. Still, I find this 7 volume novel to be one of Wolfe's most satisfying. If Wolfe had not confirmed that Dorcas was Severian's grandmother, it would still be a highly controversial theory. Does that

make

The Book of the New Sun a failed work?

And in many cases the questions thought to be unresolvable merely haven't been considered with enough intensity. Many people seem to find the basic plot of "Peace" (How did everyone die? What's the deal with the guy slamming oranges against the big metal doors? etc?) to be inscrutable. But it was clear to me, the first time I read it--after I thought about it a few days.

Regards,

James,

The Absolute Lord of Unpopular Theories

James Wynn — 19 Jan 2010, 14:32 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

BTW, James, you are exactly right that Wolfe said something indeterminate and that I assumed some on top of that. I still **think** I am correct in thinking that Hyacinth is genetically female, but I no longer believe that Wolfe confirmed that. Should I meet him again I shall ask him in more detail.

I will be very surprised if you are wrong about Hyacinth.

J.