

Silkhorn^H^H^H^H and Severian

The Whorl list — 5 messages, 4 voices, 31 May 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1426>

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Jerry Friedman — 31 May 2001, 15:14

I promised you folks an unfounded speculation.

Several

participants on this list have mentioned that some crucial event seems to occur between Silkhorn's last two astral trips to Urth. In the second-last, Hoof says Silkhorn "looked more like our father there, not really like him, but more than on Blue." (RRTTW, Chap.

17, two trips in quick succession to the _Samru_.) In the last, Hoof says, "Before he had looked a lot like our real father, and Hide says that is the way he always looked on the Red Sun Whorl. Now he did not." (Chap. 19, a mausoleum [apparently not Severian's hideout] in the necropolis, and the oubliette.) But we're told about very little that happens between these two trips. And what is the reason for this strange clarity on such an important point as the hero's astral appearance?

Several people have also criticized Silkhorn's meetings with Severian for being indecisive, apparently just for decoration--"fanficcy", as Jacob Corbin aptly said.

So could there be a connection between these two puzzles? Are you already ahead of me? Does Severian by his mere presence resurrect Silk? Right around the same time, Triskele stirred to life beneath his hand, two years before the Claw came to him. (From somewhere at the end of _Citadel_.)

There's a strong objection to this speculation: the transformation happens at the wrong time. We might have expected it at Silkhorn's first meeting with Severian (Chap. 13), or failing that, when he dreams of Severian (Chap. 15), or at their last meeting, but not in between.

I can see two answers to the objection. First, time does strange things around Severian and the Claw (or vice-versa). Second, maybe it was a gradual process that Hoof didn't really notice till it was (almost?) complete. This latter could also apply to other possible causes for the change of appearance.

Incidentally, the trip on the _Samru_ to see the Great Scylla might also have had something to do with Silk's resurrection. The trip ends on Ocean, and maybe they pass the beaches where the wild roses grow whose thorns are Claws. (Yes, it's my favorite scene too. And above I typed "horns" instead of "thorns".)

Any comments?

Jerry Friedman

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 31 May 2001, 16:24 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman wrote:
Any comments?

Oh, I suppose ... a few ...

Given the change in the Narr's astrally-projected "appearance," I suspect that, yes, there is a change in his or their "soul" somewhere, somehow, in between those two dates. I suspect it may not, however, have anything directly to do with Li'l Severian.

Actually, I feel like Darwin dealing with Wallace: I haven't formulated a really solid theory, yet, which is why I haven't posted it yet, but given that Jerry is now concentrating on the significant parts of the text (which have hitherto been mentioned in passing but not really attended to), I think I want to stick my oar in and establish a sort of priority on what I do have.

The missing piece here is the deScyllification of Oreb.

The connection is fairly clear at a structural level:

(A) something happens to free a body (Oreb's) of a soul or astral persona (Scylla-the-daughter-of-Pas) which has possessed or partially possessed it, or, *mutatis mutandis*, to free that soul or astral persona from the body which has possessed it;

(B) something happens to change the soul or astral persona (Horn's?) associated with a body (Silk's) which seems to be or to have been partially possessed.

But this isn't really developed into any kind of thesis or theory, as you can see; all I'm saying here is "this pattern seems to establish something of the possible meaning-space for case (B) by putting it into relief against case (A)."

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It doesn't look unfounded to me, though I'm not ready to agree with the conclusions.

Several people have also criticized Silkhorn's meetings with Severian for being indecisive, apparently just for decoration--"fanficcy", as Jacob Corbin aptly said.

I think they may even be a deliberate red herring. Or, if they serve as real clues, they may be serving as clues to something else entirely.

(H'mmm. If Sev is sort-of-kind-of Jesus, and Silk is sort- of-kind-of Moses, then can this be a sort-of-kind-of Transfiguration, a fancy name for the scene in the Gospels where Peter sees Jesus chatting with his old pals Moses and Abraham... Naaaaaaah...)

Does Severian by his mere presence resurrect Silk?

I find this highly dubious for half a dozen reasons; the most important of which: I think Silk is neither more nor less dead at the end of *_RttW_* than he is when the Narr first takes up his pen in Gaon. The "climax" of *_RttW_* is not a resurrection but a recognition, and what is recognized is something that the Narr has been trying very hard not to see since long before he began astrally travelling to Green, let alone Urth.

There's a strong objection to this speculation: the transformation happens at the wrong time. We might have expected it at Silkhorn's first meeting with Severian (Chap. 13), or failing that, when he dreams of Severian (Chap. 15), or at their last meeting, but not in between.

Here is one weakness your theory clearly doesn't have. On the many occasions when Sev commits miracles without knowing it, he seems to do so in a rather haphazard fashion, and not necessarily at the first opportunity. (How many encounters does he have with water before suddenly turning some into wine... And it isn't as if that had been for a wedding!)

--Dan'I

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Michael Straight — 01 Jun 2001, 08:33 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On Thu, 31 May 2001, Jerry Friedman wrote:
Incidentally, the trip on the *_Samru_* to see the Great Scylla might also have had something to do with Silk's resurrection. The trip ends on Ocean, and maybe they pass the beaches where the wild roses grow whose thorns are Claws.

This is kind of a joke isn't it? Isn't the whole point of that scene that the "Claw" is merely a common thorn that is holy and powerful only in the sense everything made by the Increate is holy and powerful?

-Rostrum

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Michael Straight — 01 Jun 2001, 08:54 · follows Michael Straight

On Thu, 31 May 2001, Jerry Friedman wrote:
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Severian (Chap. 13), or failing that, when he dreams of Severian (Chap. 15), or at their last meeting, but not in between.

Silk isn't whole when he's astrally traveling - he's separated from his body. So it's reasonable that any healing that Severian initiates might not bear fruit until after Silk's soul is reunited with his body.

And then, on Thu, 31 May 2001, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:
(H'mmm. If Sev is sort-of-kind-of Jesus, and Silk is sort-of-kind-of Moses, then can this be a sort-of-kind-of Transfiguration, a fancy name for the scene in the Gospels where Peter sees Jesus chatting with his old pals Moses and Abraham... Naaaaaaah...)

I have to admit I kinda like this, but it would work better if Silk met Severian just before he left for Yesod.

Does Severian by his mere presence resurrect Silk?

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I agree it's overstating things to say Silk is resurrected, but I think you could say he has been healed in some way. And Severian is definitely able to heal people.

-Rostrum

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James Jordan — 01 Jun 2001, 12:30 · follows Michael Straight

Hmmm. Others have objected that Silk merely recognizes who he has been all along at the end, but I've never been happy with that. I think you are on to something really important. I think up to this point, the Narrator really has been Horn in Silk's body, and that then Silk is resurrected in some important sense, with the result that both are now alive in Silk's body at the end. In fact, given how Severian himself exists, I'd say Silk is now primary, with Horn alive inside him, as Thecla and others are alive inside of Severian. Silk is primary, like Severian, because it is Silk's body and not Horn's.

I'm thinking too of the words of the Neighbor, that Silk's "spirit" is dying. Clearly Silk's body does not die. When Silk's spirit is resurrected (and as Dan'l noted, he is in astral form, so a "spirit" resurrection makes perfect sense), it takes back over Silk's body, and Horn recedes to a Thecla status. Like Thecla, Horn's body is dead, but his spirit still lives, in Silk.

Your thesis supports my "Christian theology" contention that Horn-Narrator has been living off the body and blood of Silk, and adds to it that after Silk's resurrection, Horn lives "in Silk." Both are core aspects of Christian thought (Christians live off the body and blood of the crucified Christ; Christians live "in" the resurrected Christ), and it makes a lot of sense to me that Wolfe would play with both ideas.

I like your thesis a lot. It justifies what seems like a wholly gratuitous introduction of Severian into the text, and I think it ties up a lot of questions. I'm on your side (for now anyway).

Nutria

At 03:14 PM 5/31/2001 -0700, you wrote:

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