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The Whorl list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 04 Jun 2001

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Jerry Friedman — 04 Jun 2001, 13:50

From: "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>
Subject: RE: (whorl) Silkhorn^H^H^H and Severian
Date: Thu, 31 May 2001 16:24:31 -0700
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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)."

Nww that you mention it, I can see a parallel between
the two events, but I'm still looking forward to your
showing any other kind of connection.

I promised you folks an unfounded speculation.

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

It's unfounded in the sense that I don't know of any
positive evidence for it. There's just an event
without an apparent cause right next to an event
without much apparent effect. I was hoping someone
would find more definite evidence for (or against) my
speculation.

...

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.

Well, it doesn't seem that settled to me, but let me
rephrase the question in line with Rostrum's point,
which I should have considered in the first place:
Does Severian by his mere presence contribute to
healing Silk? What's the next-best reason to find it
dubious?

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!)

True, but does he ever perform a miracle that takes
effect at some point in the next few days?

Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman — 04 Jun 2001, 13:54 · follows Jerry Friedman

From: Michael Straight <straight at email.unc.edu>
Subject: Re: (whorl) Silkhorn^H^H^H^H and Severian
Date: Fri, 1 Jun 2001 08:33:31 -0400 (EDT)

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?

You're right, and I don't know how I was overlooking
that, but I wasn't joking. I think there still might
be something special about the Claw and those bushes.
Should I subscribe to the Urth list to discuss this
further?

Jerry Friedman

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 04 Jun 2001, 14:49 · follows Jerry Friedman

Nww that you mention it, I can see a parallel between
the two events, but I'm still loooking forward to your
showing any other kind of connection.

... so am I. This is a case where I am looking at a repeated pattern and saying, in nerdish tone,
"This _means_ something," but am not yet clear on just _what_ it means. I haven't quite started
building models of the Whorl out of mashed potatoes. Yet.

There's just an event without an apparent cause right next to an event without much apparent effect. I was hoping someone would find more definite evidence for (or against) my speculation.

Actually, when you put it at that level of abstraction, it sounds much more convincing. (Odd; normally lower levels of abstraction convince me better. Somehow, with Mr Wolfe's work, this gets reversed.) Since I have -- somewhat prematurely, perhaps -- determined to take the position that tBotSS does in fact make some kind of coherent sense, but that it is up to us to tease it out of the text, I suppose I'm likely to jump at anything that looks promising.

... [L]et me rephrase the question in line with Rostrum's point, which I should have considered in the first place:
Does Severian by his mere presence contribute to healing Silk? What's the next-best reason to find it dubious?

Phrased that way, without an unnecessary and doubtful resurrection, I find it far less dubious. I'm inclined to agree that the Narr, at the story's end, is a being like Severian-and-Thecla[-and-sometimes-a-whole-lotta-Autarchs-too]; but I'm disinclined, modulo something very concrete, to believe that there is any meaningful way in which Silk is "dead" at the beginning of OBW but alive at the end of RttW. Whatever exactly happens so that the Narr can finally be called "Silk" openly after his interview with Remora, it seems to be less a resurrection and more a revelation of something that the Narr has been avoiding admitting to himself since page one.

That said, tBotSS offers the prettiest Lupine problem in time- of-narration since PEACE. Some of the events narrated by the Narr are told in a near-present first-person, shortly after they occur; some in middle-past tense; some in fairly-distant past tense, gradually catching up (?) with the present. And then the whole document is, apparently, subject to at least light "editing" and significant supplementing by up to four other persons, at an unknown distance of time after the departure of the Narr. While we seem to have fairly clear indications of which bits fit into which category, the presence of the editors makes it somewhat ambiguous -- we know that the editors do not object to inserting a few obvious editorial comments into the text; have they made any less obvious comments? Any fictionalizing? Any tonings-down or deletions? Can we even begin to guess? And to what extent are their "reconstructions" of events on the _Whorl_ to be trusted, anyway? How much did the Narr really tell them, how much do they make up? This is the problem of tBotLS grown up and turned very nasty.

True, but does he ever perform a miracle that takes effect at some point in the next few days?

How would he know?

--Dan'l

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