

Watts, presentiments, eponyms

The Urth list — 6 messages, 5 voices, 24 Feb 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2986>

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.

maa32 — 24 Feb 2002, 00:37

I have a saved copy of Watts' Psalm 90, so I decided I would reprint it in its entirety here (the 1st part, anyway). Has anyone commented on how the theme of a saving flood in the stanza after the one that opens Shadow of the Torturer is pretty prophetic for the text? Here is the psalm:

Isaac Watts Psalm 90

Part 1.

Man frail, and God eternal.

1 Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

2 Under the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

4 Thy word commands our flesh to dust,
"Return, ye sons of men:"
All nations rose from earth at first,
And turn to earth again.

5 A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an ev'ning gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

6 [The busy tribes of flesh and blood,
With all their lives and cares,
Are carried downwards by the flood,
And lost in following years.

7 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream

Dies at the op'ning day.

8 Like flowery fields the nations stand
Pleased with the morning light;
The flowers beneath the mower's hand
Lie with'ring ere 'tis night.]

9 Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

Note how similar stanza 8 is to the conclusion of Return to the Whorl where the chrasologic writings invoke the Hyacinth and the Shepherd. Stanza 6 explicitly invokes a flood that wipes out the "tribes of flesh and blood" just like in Urth of the New Sun. I am especially interested in 8 because of its "like flowery fields the nations stand pleased with the morning light" which compares the nations to, you guessed it, vegetable matter in the form of foliage that withers when the sun isn't there. In any case, the poem definitely presages the flooding of Urth, and earlier stanzas also reflect the ability of the vivimancer to recall dust to living matter. I was fascinated by the flower imagery, and even if you don't buy my ideas about the Short Sun, you can read the Green Man into stanza eight. It also occurs to me that The Green Man receives his nourishment directly from Severian's stellar body - that white hole actually feeds him. As such, a part of Severian comes to rest in the Green Man (just as a part of Thecla comes to rest in Severian, or a part of Horn comes to rest in Silk, or ... through the same sun dependent association that I am willing to ascribe to Horn/Silk, a part of Severian comes to rest in Silkhorn the heliophagist) KEEP IN MIND THAT THE GREEN MAN CAN USE THE CORRIDORS OF TIME. I propose that Silkhorn is a type of green man, and has no problem going back in time - in part because Severian has been assimilated through their feasting on his symbolic sun body and incorporated into their being. Convenient, eh? Horn can be every man of his kind because he feasts on the sun that comes from Severian, who really is every man of his kind, and becomes more closely associated with him. Note the parallels between Severian and Horn in the story of the man with the black blade in In Green's Jungles. He loses his light and sword in a deluge, just as Severian loses his sword and his special light at Lake Diuturna fighting Baldanders. Horn brings a flood and clears out the sewer, Severian brings a flood and clears out the crap of the earth.

William stated my reading didn't add anything to the text for him. For me, it allows us to know what happened to the people on the moon who were eaten by the terraformed trees that got out of control, it allows us to know how the green men came to inhabit the urth, it details the future fate of urth, it reveals what happens to Horn's spirit in Babbie, it makes sense of the secret of the inhumu, (whose feastings produce heritable genetic features in their children), it explains how the vegetable inhumu can survive jumping from Blue to Green, it makes sense of the last Hyacinth quote, it makes sense of the mysterious eucharists by applying their symbolic value to the text, it makes sense of who is watching the narrator in those eucharist scenes, it explains all the similarities and differences between Urth and Blue, it explains the pit scene and the subsequent powers of Horn, it explains exactly why the neighbors respect Horn (since the batch he talks with were made from his DNA), it explains the nature of his affinity for jungle life, and it reveals that it really is just Silk at the end of Short Sun, and makes sense of the narrative changes from one book to the next. It makes sense of why the narrator needs to find Seawrack, the spy of the mother who jeopardizes the fate of mankind. It explains why his staff might be alive and people are afraid of it. It explains how his image might actually visit Inclito's mother across time so that he shows up in her story (time instead of astral travel). I think that it adds

quite a bit to a reading of short sun. It also explains the double limbed animals that are exactly like the animals of Urth. Is a hus a rhinocerus or a polyploid Alzebo?

Now, are the eponyms those white statues that move around the House Absolute in Claw of the Conciliator? In In Green's Jungles, Regalio seems to place some importance on eponyms when he first goes back to Urth, and I'm trying to figure out that scene now in a way that will justify its temporal removal from the present of the text. An eponym is also a word that comes from someone's name, like sandwiches or johns/crappers (according to urban legend, anyway). I was trying to figure out what eponym might help solve that scene. Regalio says his real name is Roger, but that means very little to me. Roger? Any famous eponyms associated with that?

Marc Aramini

Jeff Wilson — 25 Feb 2002, 00:31 · follows maa32

From:
maa32 <maa32 at dana.ucc.nau.edu>

Isaac Watts Psalm 90

It also explains the double
limbed animals that are exactly like the animals of Urth.

I am still hopeful that Blue and Green turn out to be Urth and Lune in
Planet Of The Apes fashion, though perhaps in an era =before= the Whorl left.

Now, are the eponyms those white statues that move around the House Absolute in Claw of the Conciliator? In In Green's Jungles, Regalio seems to place some importance on eponyms when he first goes back to Urth, and I'm trying to figure out that scene now in a way that will justify its temporal removal from the present of the text. An eponym is also a word that comes from someone's name, like sandwiches or johns/crappers (according to urban legend, anyway). I was trying to figure out what eponym might help solve that scene. Regalio says his real name is Roger, but that means very little to me. Roger? Any famous eponyms associated with that?

Roger is an acknowledgment in radio chatter, which may be thought of as astronaut talk. Regalio's eponyms could conceivably be regale, to entertain by story telling, potentially a projection of the author into the text, and regalia, which usually means an official dressy costume, but can mean the symbols and emblems, and insignia displayed on such a costume, making an meta-meta-referential symbolism that could lead to almost any meaning remotely pertinent to the text.

Jeff Wilson
How Am I Posting? 1-800-555-6789
"If your SecOp can see you, so can the enemy." -Cpt Law

--

Alice K. Turner — 25 Feb 2002, 01:03 · follows Jeff Wilson

I'm not quite sure what the context is for reprinting this. It's a famous old Anglican hymn. I'm a heathen now, but I was brought up as an Episcopalian/Anglican and I will staunchly say that our music is the best--aside from a few early items by designer names (Bach, Handel etc.) and some fabulous gospel, mostly Baptist, I suppose, we win hands down for music. This one is sort of a drone, but an effective drone. Wolfe is RC; this doesn't count for him.,.

Alice

Isaac Watts Psalm 90

Part 1.

Man frail, and God eternal.

1 Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

2 Under the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

4 Thy word commands our flesh to dust,
"Return, ye sons of men:"
All nations rose from earth at first,
And turn to earth again.

5 A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an ev'ning gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

6 [The busy tribes of flesh and blood,
With all their lives and cares,
Are carried downwards by the flood,
And lost in following years.

7 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the op'ning day.

8 Like flowery fields the nations stand
Pleased with the morning light;
The flowers beneath the mower's hand
Lie with'ring ere 'tis night.]

9 Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

James Jordan — 25 Feb 2002, 04:48 · follows Alice K. Turner

Alice,

Isaac Watts was not Church of England but a Congregationalist. The Puritan Congregationalists (his forebears) sang only metrical psalms. Watts set most of the Biblical psalter to verse as new metrical psalms, though a bit more freely than was traditional (and thus as better English poems). This one, and "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun" (Psalm 72) are found in almost all English-language hymnals: Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Baptist, etc.

Wolfe is now RC, but grew up Presbyterian. He probably sang a four or five stanza reduction of Watt's Psalm 90 growing up -- few hymnals have all the stanzas.

The tune commonly used for Psalm 90, St. Anne, is famous also because Bach wrote a wonderful Prelude and Fugue for organ based on it, sometimes used for wedding processions. Marc brought it up to suggest that more than just the one stanza Wolfe quoted is relevant to the Severian narrative.

Finally, and just so you know, it is the Lutherans who have the best church music. I'll bet many of the tunes you remember actually go back to Lutheran sources. But that's only a statistical win. The Welsh cannot be excluded, nor can later Anglican, etc.

Jim Jordan (Nutria)

At 07:03 PM 2/24/2002, you wrote:

I'm not quite sure what the context is for reprinting this. It's a famous old Anglican hymn. I'm a heathen now, but I was brought up as an Episcopalian/Anglican and I will staunchly say that our music is the best--aside from a few early items by designer names (Bach, Handel etc.) and some fabulous gospel, mostly Baptist, I suppose, we win hands down for music. This one is sort of a drone, but an effective drone. Wolfe is RC; this doesn't count for him,.

Alice

Isaac Watts Psalm 90

Part 1.

Man frail, and God eternal.

1 Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

2 Under the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

4 Thy word commands our flesh to dust,
"Return, ye sons of men:"
All nations rose from earth at first,
And turn to earth again.

5 A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an ev'ning gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

6 [The busy tribes of flesh and blood,
With all their lives and cares,
Are carried downwards by the flood,
And lost in following years.

7 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the op'ning day.

8 Like flowery fields the nations stand
Pleased with the morning light;
The flowers beneath the mower's hand
Lie with'ring ere 'tis night.]

9 Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

--

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 25 Feb 2002, 18:49 · follows James Jordan

I'm not quite sure what the context is for reprinting this.

I don't have my copies to hand, but didn't Wolfe use one verse (the 'a thousand ages in thy sight' verse) as an epigraph to one of the volumes of tBotNS?

I'm a heathen now, but I was brought up as an Episcopalian/Anglican
and I will staunchly say that our music is the best

Pffff. I was also, and now I'm a Catholic, and I will staunchly say that the Methodists have everyone else beat, except for the really good gospel choirs.

Wolfe is RC; this doesn't count for him,.

Not so. Catholicism realized in the '60s and '70s that they had some really lousy hymns (see the book "Why Catholics Can't Sing"), and started efforts to change this by (1) introducing bad folk songs (anyone who was around then still shudders at the phrase "folk mass" and some of them can be driven to apoplexy by a few bars of "Kum-by-yah") and (2) cribbing good songs from other churches. So it's pretty common, for example, to hear "Amazing Grace" in a Catholic church these days.

It would not be at all unlikely for Wolfe to hear Watts in church; more to the point, though, any serious fan of Lewis Carroll eventually hunts Watts down, if only to squash him like a bug.

--Dan'I

Alice K. Turner — 26 Feb 2002, 05:12 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Thank you, Ratty, very informative post and I stand corrected. Some day I hope that you and I will get together and sing hymns. I'm not a very good singer, but I know tons of hymns and carols and love to sing them. (I bet you'd agree that RC hymns mostly suck--though you wouldn't put it that way.) I like show tunes too.

-alga

Isaac Watts was not Church of England but a Congregationalist. The Puritan Congregationalists (his forebears) sang only metrical psalms. Watts set most of the Biblical psalter to verse as new metrical psalms, though a bit more freely than was traditional (and thus as better English poems). This one, and "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun" (Psalm 72) are found in almost all English-language hymnals: Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Baptist, etc.

Wolfe is now RC, but grew up Presbyterian. He probably sang a four or five stanza reduction of

Watt's Psalm 90 growing up -- few hymnals have all the stanzas.

The tune commonly used for Psalm 90, St. Anne, is famous also because Bach wrote a wonderful Prelude and Fugue for organ based on it, sometimes used for wedding processions. Marc brought it up to suggest that more than just the one stanza Wolfe quoted is relevant to the Severian narrative.

Finally, and just so you know, it is the Lutherans who have the best church music. I'll bet many of the tunes you remember actually go back to Lutheran sources. But that's only a statistical win. The Welsh cannot be excluded, nor can later Anglican, etc.

Jim Jordan (Nutria)