

Typhon and Severian

The Urth list — 5 messages, 3 voices, 10 Mar 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3891>

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James Wynn — 10 Mar 2003, 15:31

Don postulates:

The only certainty is that Dorcas is Ouen's mother. Ouen denies ever impregnating Katherine, and the only evidence that Ouen could be Severian's father is that they look strikingly similar in profile. (Sword and Citadel, p 402). This is hardly compelling. In addition, it is thematically weak. If Dorcas is Severian's grandmother then he is committing incest in a manner that makes no sense mythopoeically. The incest only makes sense if she is his sister or his mother. Equally, the archetypes clinging to Severian's character point in a different direction. Ouen makes a much stronger adoptive father in the vein of Joseph the carpenter, or Sir Hector...

Crush tries to speed Don on his way:

Mythopoetically speaking, (if it is applicable here) Dorcas should be Severian's mother AND sister (as Isis was to Horus).

I'm not sure I see how Ouen works as Hector or Joseph. Malrubius works better in this role.

Having not read 'King Jesus' my problems with the Herod-Jesus/Typhon-Severian analogy is mythopoetic: I do agree that Typhon takes the thematic role of Herod at times - I haven't decided with Typhon's meeting with Severian in 'Urth of the New Sun' more closely parallels Herod and Jesus or Herod and John the Baptist.

According to Wolfe, tBotNS is a toying with Sun symbolism. So Severian would be expected to parallel Jesus to some extent as the 'Sun of Righteousness' (Malachi 4:2). But how is Severian, as a Sun symbol, a son of Typhon? According to Graves, Typhon is Set. And both are the dragon that devours (kills) the Sun during an eclipse and is killed by Horus. Graves also associates Typhon with the Python of Hera, whom Apollo simultaneously kills and appropriates as his servant in prophecy.

So whether one views Severian as Osirus or Horus or Apollo, how is he mythopoetically a son, heir, or descendent of Typhon? Perhaps Graves justified this association in 'King Jesus'?

* Crush

Chris — 10 Mar 2003, 17:09 · follows James Wynn

Crush says:

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Herod-Jesus/Typhon-Severian analogy is mythopoetic:
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decided with Typhon's meeting with Severian in 'Urth of the New Sun' more
closely parallels Herod and Jesus or Herod and John the Baptist.

I have trouble agreeing with this, since Typhon's role with respect to Severian is solidly and beyond question related to Satan's role with Jesus. The resemblance to Herod is going to be, in large part, a matter of Herod resembling Satan at times...

James Wynn — 10 Mar 2003, 18:54 · follows Chris

Crush says:

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I do agree that Typhon takes the thematic role of Herod at times - I haven't decided with Typhon's meeting with Severian in 'Urth of the New Sun' more closely parallels Herod and Jesus or Herod and John the Baptist.

Chris shakes his head and says:

I have trouble agreeing with this, since Typhon's role with respect to Severian is solidly and beyond question related to Satan's role with Jesus. The resemblance to Herod is going to be, in large part, a matter of Herod resembling Satan at times...

Crush responds:

I'm not sure what part you don't agree with, but I'll take a shot at an answer to the best of my ability.

As do mythological characters in Graves' works, Wolfe's characters frequently (usually) carry multiple thematic roles. So, yes, Typhon's and Severian's meeting in *Sword of the Lictor* (?) is thematically the Temptation of Christ. Typhon holds Severian by the heel and Severian "crushes" Typhon's head (Gen 3:15). But these roles occur because Typhon/Python/Set/Satan is the serpent-enemy of the Sun (Apollo, Horus, Christ, etc.).

IMO Typhon's name is the strongest argument that he had something to do with the dimming of Urth's sun since this would establish Typhon's and Severian's relationship as Set and Horus.

But I don't see how Herod is thematically the enemy of the Sun. Herod the Great maybe (the one who killed the infants in Bethlehem), but not the Herod of the trial of Jesus. This Herod is curious about Jesus. He is vaguely worried that he might John the Baptist resurrected, and he'd like to have Jesus perform some miracles on command, but that's the extent of it. Just as Pilate is suspicious of the Sanhedrin's motives for trying to get him personally involved in Jesus' prosecution, Herod is suspicious of Pilate's motives. Neither the Sanhedrin, nor Pilate, nor Herod, are good stand-ins as the Devil. None wish to be openly identified as Jesus' executioners. All three are in a crisis of choices over which they cannot freely act nor (except for Herod) freely extricate themselves. None act with knowledge of the full significance of their actions.

The thing is that Wolfe might have written the Herod-Typhon parallel for reasons not directly connected to Typhon's name or even 'King Jesus'. For example, in "Calde of the Long Sun", Silk and Loris have a conversation at Blood's house that parallels Jesus' and Pilate's. Why? Loris and his cousins take many other thematic roles in the Long Sun as serpent-enemies, but I have trouble connecting any of these roles to Pilate.

So, does Typhon's Herodian similarities mean that he has the same relationship to Severian as Herod did to Jesus in 'King Jesus'? Is there a genuine Typhon-Herod connection even if it is only in 'King Jesus'? Don's quote from 'King Jesus' had ****Jesus**** with a Typhonic beard, not Herod.

I don't know of a Herod-Satan association. If there were one, then I'd be much more prepared to accept Don's theories.

-- Crush

Chris — 10 Mar 2003, 19:56 · follows James Wynn

Crush responds:

I'm not sure what part you don't agree with, but I'll take a shot at an answer to the best of my ability.

Chris backpedals:

What I don't agree with is that there is a Herod-Typhon connection, and I agree strongly with most of what you just said.

I also wouldn't go so far as to say there is a Herod-Satan connection; I merely think that there are a couple of similarities which can lead to mistaking a Typhon-Satan connection with a Typhon-Herod association, *if you happen to be looking for it*. Herod, for example, is also a tempter - whether he believes Jesus has the powers he claims or not, he tries to goad Jesus into using his power (for unworthy ends?). It's not too off the wall to see Herod as a somewhat satanic character, imho, but I don't know that this is grounds to say that Herod is a representation or stand-in for Satan as such.

In any event, this probably qualifies as over-analysis, because while the Jesus/Satan parallel with Severian/Typhon is obvious, it is not *complete*.

Peace,
Chris

Lisa Schaffer-Doggett — 11 Mar 2003, 06:31 · follows Chris

On Monday, March 10, 2003, at 11:56 AM, Chris wrote:

Crush responds:

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Chris backpedals:

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Don replies quickly as his wife wants to go walk and Latro awaits:

The Typhon Herod connection is in King Jesus in that Herod wants to revive the cult of

Set/Typhon which involves the hierarchy as well of the Goddess. In the book Jesus is a direct descendant of Herod. His father is Herod Antipater, Herod the Great's heir. The connection between the two books is symbolic rather than parallel.