

Questions . . .

The Urth list — 41 messages, 21 voices, 27 Nov 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4932>

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Eric Ortlund — 27 Nov 2007, 00:42

Dear Friends,

Forgive me again if I'm repeating old questions, but perhaps some of you can help with the following . . .

1) What is the larger significance of the story Sev reads to Jonas about the man fleshed from dreams? I get that it's a re-working of the Theseus and Minotaur story, but is it anything more than an entertaining interlude? Is it some kind of commentary on the surrounding narrative - or Jonas' story? Severian finishes the story with a dismissive comment about it being an idle tale, but I'm suspicious something more is going on here.

2) When Severian meets Rudesind the second time before meeting the Autarch, is Rudesind's confusion about where they are - he keeps talking about being back in the Citadel, and how they can check the map in Ultan's library - intentional? Is he hinting something to Severian?

3) Is there a deeper significance to the code phrases Vodalus gives Severian? There's so much about ships elsewhere in the book (the pelagic argosy) - the ship on the tomb Sev rests in as a boy, the ship he sails to Yesod in - and the Autarch drops the phrase to Sev. as he's talking about the higher world Severian will eventually travel to. Or is it "just" a phrase?

Many thanks,
Eric

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Jeff Wilson — 27 Nov 2007, 03:48 · in reply to Eric Ortlund

Eric Ortlund wrote:
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interlude? Is it some kind of commentary on the surrounding narrative - or Jonas' story? Severian finishes the story with a dismissive comment about it being an idle tale, but I'm suspicious something more is going on here.

I believe this is foreshadowing of the whole thing about aquastors, eidolons, and other projected people.

2) When Severian meets Rudesind the second time before meeting the Autarch, is Rudesind's confusion about where they are - he keeps talking about being back in the Citadel, and how they can check the map in Ultan's library - intentional? Is he hinting something to Severian?

I've always taken this to be a sign that the Citadel and the House Absolute share underground infrastructure.

3) Is there a deeper significance to the code phrases Vodalus gives Severian? There's so much about ships elsewhere in the book (the pelagic argosy) - the ship on the tomb Sev rests in as a boy, the ship he sails to Yesod in - and the Autarch drops the phrase to Sev. as he's talking about the higher world Severian will eventually travel to. Or is it "just" a phrase?

"pelagic" makes it a specific sort of ship, one that sails the high seas. This distinguishes it from the Tzadkiel, or the riverine vessel Severian nearly sinks in Urth. Also, argosy can be multiple ships. Hmm, perhaps "pelagic" is the only sort of vessel *not* encountered in Severian's chronicle, though the crypt would seem to depict one.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Transient — 27 Nov 2007, 04:17 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Nov 26, 2007, at 10:48 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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When I first read those lines, I went and looked up pelagic and found a definition that I thought meant in the very deep, open sea, very far from land.

So a "pelagic argosy" is kind of a neat paradox in that way. There you are far, far from the shore, and you see the shore. What's that! I'm scared. See what I mean?

Lane Haygood — 27 Nov 2007, 04:22 · in reply to Transient

I thought "pelagic" referred to open-ocean zones -- like there are different *-pelagics for different depths (i.e., mesopelagic, epipelagic, etc.)

Argosy was, I thought, a reference to the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece, a fleece said to give one the ability to fly. It would seem to fit with some of the other Greek allusions that Mr. Wolfe is fond of.

But then again, I'm no expert, certainly.

Lane

On Nov 26, 2007, at 10:17 PM, Transient wrote:

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brunians at brunians.org — 27 Nov 2007, 05:02 · in reply to Lane Haygood

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No, the Argo was Jason's ship. An argosy is a voyage generically similar to Jason's, would be my first guess.

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David Duffy — 27 Nov 2007, 05:28 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Mon, 26 Nov 2007, Jeff Wilson wrote:

Eric Ortlund wrote:

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pelagic argosy) - the ship on the tomb Sev rests in as a boy, the ship he sails to Yesod in - and the Autarch drops the phrase to Sev. as he's talking about the higher world Severian will eventually travel to. Or is it "just" a phrase?

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One reading is that it refers to those enemies of the Commonwealth that have their home underwater. Perhaps an overreading, but I quite liked the possibility it also referred to Pelagianism (perfectability without grace, yada yada).

David Duffy.

Lane Haygood — 27 Nov 2007, 05:30 · in reply to David Duffy

On Nov 26, 2007, at 11:28 PM, David Duffy wrote:

On Mon, 26 Nov 2007, Jeff Wilson wrote:

Eric Ortland wrote:

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David Duffy.

Why assume it has but one meaning? Wolfe probably intended for it to have different layers of meaning. He's crafty like that.

Lane

James Crossley — 27 Nov 2007, 05:33 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On 11/26/07 9:02 PM, "brunians at brunians.org" <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

Argosy was, I thought, a reference to the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece, a fleece said to give one the ability to fly. It would seem to fit with some of the other Greek allusions that Mr. Wolfe is fond of.

No, the Argo was Jason's ship. An argosy is a voyage generically similar to Jason's, would be my first guess.

Not a voyage, but a ship. The OED says:

Hist. and poet. A merchant-vessel of the largest size and burden; esp. those of Ragusa and Venice.

As for the etymology, the word surprisingly has naught to do with the Argo:

[App. ad. It. Ragusea, pl. Ragusee, i.e. una (nave or caracca) Ragusea, a Ragusan (vessel or carack), best repr. by the earliest form ragusye; the transposition in argosea, arguze, argozee, etc., is no doubt connected with the fact that Ragusa (in Venetian, Ragusi) itself appears in 16th c. English as Aragouse, Arragouese, Arragosa. Cf. also the prec. word, in which Argosine seems to represent It. Ragusino, synonym of Raguseo.]

That argosies were reputed to take their name from Ragusa, is stated by several writers of 17th c.; and the derivation is made inductively certain by investigations made for us by Mr. A. J. Evans, showing the extent of Ragusan trade with England, and the familiarity of Englishmen with the Ragusee or large and richly-freighted merchant ships of Ragusa, ?Argosies with portly saile, Like Signiors and rich Burgers on the flood [which] ouer-peere the pettie Traffiquers That curtsie to them, do them reuerence, As they flye by them with their wouen wings. (SHAKES. Merch. V. I. i. 9.) No reference to the ship Argo is traceable in the early use of the word.]

Roy C. Lackey — 27 Nov 2007, 06:30 · follows James Crossley

Eric wrote:

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-Roy

brunians at brunians.org — 27 Nov 2007, 09:26 · in reply to James Crossley

Interesting and cool.

.

On 11/26/07 9:02 PM, "brunians at brunians.org" <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

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thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 27 Nov 2007, 12:27 · follows brunians at brunians.org

On Tue, 27 Nov 2007 11:42:17 +1100 Eric Ortlund
<eortlund at briercrest.ca> wrote:
Dear Friends,

Forgive me again if I'm repeating old questions, but perhaps some of you can help with the following . . .

1) What is the larger significance of the story Sev reads to Jonas about the man fleshed from dreams? I get that it's a re-working of the Theseus and Minotaur story, but is it anything more than an entertaining interlude? Is it some kind of commentary on the surrounding narrative - or Jonas' story? Severian finishes the story with a dismissive comment about it being an idle tale, but I'm suspicious something more is going on here.

I think this fable might be partly a conflation of the Theseus myth with a story which is in fact Jonas' own.

Something like this: The enclave of magicians is a research institute; the magical son is a robot; the story is perhaps a dim remembrance of a time when Abaia or his ilk began to oppress or threaten Urth, and humanity launched missions into space against them, crewed by robots. Jonas' voyage was one of those missions.

The rather abrupt return-to-Athens-ending is perhaps a hint that, in fact, none of these missions ever returned, or not for aeons - the "Fortunate Cloud" was lost in the Coal Sack or whatever, and the story of the "victory" is really just a piece of wish fulfilment.

I imagine it would have been quite poignant for Jonas, hearing his story conflated with a (to him) ancient myth - his past lost in deep time etc etc.

Adam Thornton — 27 Nov 2007, 15:55 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

On Nov 27, 2007, at 6:27 AM, <thalassocrat at nym.hush.com>
<thalassocrat at nym.hush.com> wrote:

On Tue, 27 Nov 2007 11:42:17 +1100 Eric Ortlund
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It's also a Borges riff; I think the story in question is "The Circular Ruins." Of course there's also the one about the Minotaur which I thought was the source for Seventeen, having forgotten that "fourteen" rather than "seventeen" was "infinity" in "The House Of Asterion." There's a lot of Borges going on in the first couple books, especially.

Adam

Jeff Eoff — 27 Nov 2007, 16:28 · in reply to Eric Ortlund

An HTML attachment was scrubbed...

URL:

<http://lists.urth.net/pipermail/urth-urth.net/attachments/20071127/3a949a2e/attachment.htm>

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 27 Nov 2007, 17:34 · in reply to Eric Ortlund

Eric,

These are great questions for examples of how to unpack the layers of meaning Wolfe stuffs into his texts.

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the man fleshed from dreams? I get that it's a re-working of the Theseus and Minotaur story, but is it anything more than an entertaining interlude? Is it some kind of commentary on the surrounding narrative - or Jonas' story? Severian finishes the story with a dismissive comment about it being an idle tale, but I'm suspicious something more is going on here.

At one level, of course, it's a retelling of the Greek hero-tale of Theseus and the Minotaur. The bit about a hero fleshed from dreams foreshadows the concept of "aquastors" and in particular the fact that the Severian who becomes the New Sun is himself an aquastor, fleshed from his own will (dream) when his body dies on the star-sailing vessel, who will pass through the spacetime labyrinth to bring the New Sun and destroy the monsters that besiege Urth.

2) When Severian meets Rudesind the second time before meeting the

Autarch, is Rudesind's confusion about where they are - he keeps talking about being back in the Citadel, and how they can check the map in Ultan's library - intentional? Is he hinting something to Severian?

I don't think Rudesind is confused; I think that the Citadel and the House Absolute are in some way the same place. Mirrors...

3) Is there a deeper significance to the code phrases Vodalus gives Severian? There's so much about ships elsewhere in the book (the pelagic argosy) - the ship on the tomb Sev rests in as a boy, the ship he sails to Yesod in - and the Autarch drops the phrase to Sev. as he's talking about the higher world Severian will eventually travel to. Or is it "just" a phrase?

There's a *lot* here.

First, when a pelagic (deep-sea) argosy "sights land," it means that the long voyage is nearly over. This is true, but not perhaps in the way that Vodalus intends.

Second, the argosy is "pelagic" in the sense of Pelagianism: the HeiroFoos are guilty of the heresy of trying to perfect humans through natural means rather than relying on divine grace.

The ship on Sev's tomb *is* Tzadkiel's ship; at one point, it is implied that there is only one ship of this sort in the Universe.

There are no coincidences

[COINCIDENCE: You weren't paying attention to the other half of what was going on. -- Chad C. Mulligan, "The HipCrime Vocab"] in the Book of the New Sun; what seems to be a coincidence is always at least a synchronicity and most likely part of someone's plan, if only Wolfe's map of the meanings of the Book.

One of the many things I love about the Book is that what appears at first to be driven by a series Dickensian coincidences turns out to be a causally-driven plot (though, admittedly, the causality does not always work forwards in linear time).

On another level, of course, it's just a phrase.

Someone else wanna unpack the second password?

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

I am miserable, he is miserable,

We are miserable.

Can't we have a party? Would he rather have a party?

Eric Ortlund — 27 Nov 2007, 17:42 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Thanks for the helpful answer, Roy.

On an unrelated note, I was struck how, in his conversation with Sev, the Autarch says that Inire has been putting together clever contraptions since the first Autarch - which must make him very, very old (right?). I'm sure this has already been discussed, but Inire is apparently a hierodule (or something of that sort).

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

From: urth-bounces at lists.urth.net [mailto:urth-bounces at lists.urth.net] On Behalf Of Roy C. Lackey
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2007 12:30 AM
To: The Urth Mailing List
Subject: Re: (urth) Questions . . . [mx][spf]

Eric wrote:

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-Roy

Eric Ortlund — 27 Nov 2007, 17:48 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

Wow, nice answer. I had never thought of it that way.

Wolfe must plan these books out unto the nth degree. As I remember, the issue of humans sailing out into space and getting lost in time isn't explicitly discussed until Gunnie talks about it

in Urth of the NS - which Wolfe wrote years later. But he had it all planned out.

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

From: urth-bounces at lists.urth.net [mailto:urth-bounces at lists.urth.net] On Behalf Of thalassocrat at nym.hush.com Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2007 6:28 AM To: The Urth Mailing List Subject: Re: (urth) Questions . . . [mx][spf]

On Tue, 27 Nov 2007 11:42:17 +1100 Eric Ortlund <eortlund at briercrest.ca> wrote:

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I imagine it would have been quite poignant for Jonas, hearing his story conflated with a (to him) ancient myth - his past lost in deep time etc etc.

Eric Ortlund — 27 Nov 2007, 17:57 · in reply to Jeff Eoff

Hi Jeff -

This is a very interesting answer: I'm suspicious that the story does work on several levels/apply in several different directions. The identity of both Jonas and Severian is, of course, problematic: both change into something else (Jonas into something at least partially human after his ship crashes, and Severian after he dies in Urth of the New Sun and is re-constituted as an eidolon or aquastor or whatever). And both sail on ships. So the man fleshed from dreams might be a kind of allegory (at least partially) for either of their lives.

It's difficult to disassociate the naviscaput (navis = ship, caput = head) from Abaia. But I wonder if the "Pelagic Argosy" might hint in both ways . . . as a "ship of the deeps" or something like that, it might hint at Abaia and the forces of chaos coming out of the sea to storm the land. The fact that Vodalus is in league with these powers would support that. On the other hand, I wonder if it is more likely that, since the phrase is of the ship of the deeps sighting land, it refers more hopefully to the ships Sev sails on - the one to Yesod, and the one on Urth after the

flood destroys everything. That the ship sights land is a hopeful sign; it can come to rest (whether on Yesod or a purged Urth). Ironically, Vodulas is speaking better than he knows about the coming of the new sun.

Eric Ortlund — 27 Nov 2007, 18:10 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

That quote about coincidence is perfect; I gotta remember that.

Thanks for the superb answers; it's deeply satisfying to see the deeper coherence to this story lurking beneath the whirlwind of events.

I'm again struck by the "repetition" of themes in Wolfe - and I don't at all mean that as a criticism, because his themes are superb! - but people don't tend to stay who they are in his books. Obviously Silk is the parade example of this, but it also happens in WK with Ben. It's like the same issues keep coming up in Wolfe's mind, surfacing repeatedly in his novels.

As far as quercine penetralia - i.e., the inner recesses (penetralia) of an oak (quercine) - I have absolutely no idea. Oak trees don't seem to show up anywhere else in the book. Ships do, but oak trees?

Not to belabor this, but I'm noticing this time through the BHS the intentional ambiguity of Severian's character - or, rather, the names associated with him. He's constantly called Death (by the Autarch, by Dr. Talos) - which is true, since he's going to destroy the world in bringing about the New Sun. But when Dorcas and Sev talk after being reunited before the play in the House Absolute, as I remember, Dorcas calls Severian life, and says that the name Death is something of a deceitful insult given him by Talos. Dorcas is right, of course, because Severian will renew everything; and it is an interesting comment on Talos' character, as if he's trying to obscure what the New Sun will bring about.

One more comment and I promise to stop: I couldn't help noticing how Severian launches into a description of the beauty of the gardens in which they perform their play (before giving the text of the play) just after telling how he essentially rapes Jolenta and breaks Dorcas' heart - almost as if he's trying to distract attention from the terrible thing he's done. It reminded me of his narration of the execution of . . . blast, what's her name, the woman he executes in Saltus, who says she forgives everyone. The moral proportions of the story are all wrong - the man is reading the edict, which asks for forgiveness for the persons doing the execution, but Severian and the crowd see the execution as a matter of entertainment or simply doing one's job well (when talking with Jonas in the hotel later, all Severian says is that he did his job well - that's all he cares about). The contrast between Morwenna (is that her name?) forgiving her executors and Severian prancing around the stage not once but four times, holding her severed head, celebrating the skill with which he killed her while the crowd roars, oblivious to the moral import of his victim forgiving him, couldn't be uglier.

Pedro Pereira — 27 Nov 2007, 18:11 · in reply to Eric Ortlund

I'm not so sure that he "had it all planned out".

If you read Wolfe's interviews its perfectly clear that he did not plan out the whole Book from the start. It began as a short story that eventually grew out into 4 volumes. He must have changed details a ton of times, going back and forth untill the books got their final form. Even the theatrhical play in the House Absolute was added as filler when Wolfe realized that the 3rd book was significantly larger than the other two and he decided that he needed 4...

As for the the time travel in Urth of the New Sun I'm sure he had some ideas when he wrote the

Book, but I doubt he had much of it in his head. Wolfe has said that he wrote Urth because his editor asked it and that he had no plans to write it at all.

Matthew King — 27 Nov 2007, 18:45 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Nov 27, 2007, at 11:34 AM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

The bit about a hero fleshed from dreams foreshadows
the concept of "aquastors" and in particular the fact that the
Severian who
becomes the New Sun is himself an aquastor, fleshed from his own will
(dream)

This may relate to 1 Corinthians 15:44, where Paul describes the resurrection body as "soma pneumatikon", as opposed to the "soma psuchikon" that we are born with. English translations of this verse are difficult, because it opposes two concepts that we think of synonymous, or nearly so.

Pneuma is usually translated: "spirit", or "breath". Psuche is "soul" or "life", also sometimes "breath". Most translations of 1Cor 15:44 have the resurrection body being a "spiritual body". Many translations then render "soma psuchikon" as "physical body", because the opposite of a spiritual body must be a physical one, never mind what the text actually says. The translation I hate the least (linked below) has "natural body" for "soma psuchikon", which is somewhat less of a distortion, but still obviously a gloss on the text. A fair translation of this passage would admit that we really don't know what Paul meant by opposing psuchikon to pneumatikon, perhaps by just adjectivizing the word "soul".

"It is sown a soulish body; it is raised a spiritual body."

N. T. Wright, from whom I got all this (not being a Greek scholar), suggests translating the terms as "soul-driven" versus "spirit-driven". This leads me back to wondering whether Wolfe, whatever his ideas about the soma psuchikon, intended the aquastor to be a soma pneumatikon. Dan'l's bit about "fleshed from his own will" made me think of it.

After I wrote all this, I went a-Googling for aquastor references, and I found this in an alchemical lexicon:

<http://www.rexresearch.com/rulandus/rulxa.htm>

AQUASTOR --- is a simulaerum, which stands for a thing, but is not the thing itself.

I also found an alternate spelling of "aquaster". I don't see anything in the list archives making this connection, but it sure seems like the kind of thing Robert Borski would have uncovered before.

This origin could be seen as undermining my identification of the aquastor as a soma pneumatikon.

<http://www.gnpceb.org/esv/search/?q=1+cor+15%3A42-46>

Matthew King — 27 Nov 2007, 18:47 · in reply to Eric Ortland

On Nov 27, 2007, at 11:57 AM, Eric Ortland wrote:

It's difficult to disassociate the naviscaput (navis = ship, caput = head) from Abaia.

Ship-head makes me think of Lt. Scheisskopf in Catch-22. Juvenile, yes.

brunians at brunians.org — 27 Nov 2007, 19:01 · in reply to Matthew King

On Nov 27, 2007, at 11:34 AM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

The bit about a hero fleshed from dreams foreshadows the concept of "aquastors" and in particular the fact that the Severian who becomes the New Sun is himself an aquastor, fleshed from his own will (dream)

This may relate to 1 Corinthians 15:44, where Paul describes the resurrection body as "soma pneumatikon", as opposed to the "soma psuchikon" that we are born with. English translations of this verse are difficult, because it opposes two concepts that we think of synonymous, or nearly so.

Speak for yourself.

Anyone who wants to understand scripture reads it in the original.

Pneuma is usually translated: "spirit", or "breath". Psuche is "soul" or "life", also sometimes "breath".

Rarely. We also use breath as a synonym for life, occasionally 'the breath ran out of him'.

Most translations of 1Cor 15:44 have the resurrection body being a "spiritual body". Many translations then render "soma psuchikon" as "physical body", because the opposite of a spiritual body must be a physical one, never mind what the text actually says. The translation I hate the least (linked below) has "natural body" for "soma psuchikon", which is somewhat less of a distortion, but still obviously a gloss on the text. A fair translation of this passage would admit that we really don't know what Paul meant by opposing psuchikon to pneumatikon, perhaps by just adjectivizing the word "soul".

Pardon, the differentiation between soul and spirit (breath) is ancient. Way older than St Paul. It's also pretty clear what is meant by the two terms.

You find this differentiation in every language (that I know of) that has been used to discuss theology.

And then there's nous.

.

Matthew King — 27 Nov 2007, 19:05 · in reply to Pedro Pereira

On Nov 27, 2007, at 12:11 PM, Pedro Pereira wrote:

If you read Wolfe's interviews its perfectly clear that he did not plan out the whole Book from the start. It began as a short story that eventually grew out into 4 volumes.

Summary from <http://templetongate.tripod.com/genewolfe.htm> of a relevant bit from _The Castle of the Otter_ (which I own, but don't care to run upstairs for):

Wolfe reports, though, that he had the four volumes completed in second draft only before he went back to the first book and gave it its final polish. This was done in order for all the intricacies of the plot to work out to his satisfaction in the final book. One of the most amazing aspects about the whole ordeal is the confidence shown in Wolfe's ability to "deliver the goods" by both Kidd and Hartwell. Contracts for the tetralogy and a short story collection were signed

by all parties before either agent, editor, or publisher had read one word of the work in question.

Recursive Loop — 27 Nov 2007, 19:10 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

Gene Wolfe's "New Sun" as an homage to Borges? Hmmmm...maybe I've finally got the hook to toss to my one friend who likes Borges but despises that darn Buck Rogers stuff.

:)

FPK3

Adam Thornton — 27 Nov 2007, 20:18 · in reply to Recursive Loop

On Nov 27, 2007, at 1:10 PM, Recursive Loop wrote:

Gene Wolfe's "New Sun" as an homage to Borges? Hmmmm...maybe I've finally got the hook to toss to my one friend who likes Borges but despises that darn Buck Rogers stuff.

:)

Ultan is pretty clearly Borges. I have it on good (but secondary) authority that Cyby is Gary-Stu. And that, of course, makes Nessus Buenos Aries (which fits rather neatly).

Adam

Chris — 27 Nov 2007, 20:26 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

Brunians said:

Speak for yourself.

Anyone who wants to understand scripture reads it in the original.

Well, assuming that you're not really reading it *as* scripture. If it's the Word of God then anything essential to know that's in it can be "understood" in any language. If you're reading it as just a piece of literature or historical document then you're definitely correct. Though of course one has to beware of thinking one understands dead languages too well.

Matthew King — 27 Nov 2007, 20:32 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Nov 27, 2007, at 1:01 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

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Way older than St Paul.

Nephesh and ruah, sure.

It's also pretty clear what is meant by the two terms.

I meant to refer to the distinction between the terms "soma psuchikon" and "soma pneumatikon", not the distinction between psuche and pneuma, which is better understood. And, dear Brunians, you may be clear on the difference between soul and spirit, but that sets

you apart from 'most everyone I know. Mushy-thinking about resurrection and the afterlife seems to be a characteristic of modern, unmoored, post-Protestant Christianity.

On the topic of soul/psuche/nephesh, Brunians, have you read any of Rupert Sheldrake's work on morphogenetic fields?

Stuart Hamm — 27 Nov 2007, 20:37 · in reply to Adam Thornton

...a reading of "The Book Of Imaginary Beings" will show where he got alot of ideas...

Adam Thornton <adam at io.com> wrote:

On Nov 27, 2007, at 1:10 PM, Recursive Loop wrote:
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Adam

Pedro Pereira — 27 Nov 2007, 20:47 · in reply to Adam Thornton

JBarach at aol.com — 27 Nov 2007, 20:50 · follows Pedro Pereira

_recursive_loop at yahoo.com_ (mailto:recursive_loop at yahoo.com) writes:

Gene Wolfe's "New Sun" as an homage to Borges?
Hmmm...maybe I've finally got the hook to toss to my one friend who likes Borges but despises that darn Buck Rogers stuff.

Well, of course. Who did you think that blind librarian was? =)

John

Matthew King — 27 Nov 2007, 21:06 · in reply to Chris

On Nov 27, 2007, at 2:26 PM, Chris wrote:
If it's the Word of God then anything essential to know that's in it can be "understood" in any language.

Yikes. I can smell the brimstone fuming from Brunians's next missive already.

I can agree with this statement insofar as it parallels the idea of Turing-completeness in programming languages. Anything you can do in one Turing complete language can be done in another. But some things that are easy to do in one language are extremely difficult in others. Greenspun's Tenth Rule is the classic expression of this idea*.

Back to human languages, Modern English is ill-suited for discussions hinging on the Greek words phileo, eros, and agape. This is an old trope in the churches I've attended, but its hoariness doesn't completely obscure my point, I think. The word "charity" used to be a good

analogue of agape, but we've somehow managed to conflate charity with alms.

Another way I could agree with Chris's statement is to interpret it as saying that God has caused the scriptures to be so constituted that the important bits, what we humans need to know to get along with Him, will survive the poorest honest translations.

* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenspun's_Tenth_Rule

brunians at brunians.org — 27 Nov 2007, 21:19 · in reply to Chris

Brunians said:

Speak for yourself.

Anyone who wants to understand scripture reads it in the original.

Well, assuming that you're not really reading it *as* scripture. If it's the Word of God then anything essential to know that's in it can be "understood" in any language. If you're reading it as just a piece of literature or historical document then you're definitely correct. Though of course one has to beware of thinking one understands dead languages too well.

I dunno about that. Quran is in Arabic. Translations of Quran are not Quran. Not only are the Vedas in Sanskrit, they are not written, not the real ones. The real ones are held in the memory of the people who know them, a specialized class of Brahmins, some of whom are brought up with Sanskrit as their mother tongue. The process of learning Sanskrit is itself interesting.

Any of these veda knowers could write you out the words of the vedas, but those aren't the real vedas. The real vedas are the living books held in the minds of the people who know them.

The Indians, especially, are adept at having something be revealed truth and also an historical document and also several other things.

Christians, and especially Protestant Christians, tend to assume that the way theology works for them is the way it works for everyone. This is not the case. Judaism is the closest to Christianity, and there are vast differences in the way revealed truth is treated between the two. A minor example: to die as a Jew, you must recite the Sh'ma as close to death as you can manage it. It is an assertion or a declaration: 'Hear Oh Israel, ____ our God, ____ is One.' You don't have to believe it: you can believe what you like. Belief is not all that important in Judaism. You follow the rules, you can simultaneously be a good Jew and believe that God is hostile, or nonexistent.

.

brunians at brunians.org — 27 Nov 2007, 21:26 · in reply to Matthew King

On Nov 27, 2007, at 1:01 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:

A fair translation of this passage would admit that we really don't know what Paul meant by opposing psuchikon to pneumatikon, perhaps by just adjectivizing the word "soul".

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Way older than St Paul.

Nephesh and ruah, sure.

Indeed.

It's also pretty clear what is meant by the two terms.

I meant to refer to the distinction between the terms "soma psuchikon" and "soma pneumatikon", not the distinction between psuche and pneuma, which is better understood.

That's a fair cop.

And, dear Brunians,

You can call me Josh.

you may
be clear on the difference between soul and spirit, but that sets you
apart from 'most everyone I know.

Surely there are one or two....

Mushy-thinking about resurrection
and the afterlife seems to be a characteristic of modern, unmoored,
post-Protestant Christianity.

Well, Christian I'll own to, at least sometimes, if heretical from almost everyone's point of view,
modern I'm not, post-Protestant definitely not, unmoored, I hope not, but it's not for me to say.

On the topic of soul/psuche/nephesh, Brunians, have you read any of
Rupert Sheldrake's work on morphogenetic fields?

I have not, but it sounds intriguing. Titles and short description?

.

Matthew King — 27 Nov 2007, 21:32 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Nov 27, 2007, at 3:19 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:
Belief is not all that important in Judaism. You follow the
rules, you can simultaneously be a good Jew and believe that God is
hostile, or nonexistent.

Odysseus did not care whether Eumaeus actually believed his king was still alive, so long as
Eumaeus remained loyal.

brunians at brunians.org — 27 Nov 2007, 21:42 · in reply to Matthew King

On Nov 27, 2007, at 3:19 PM, brunians at brunians.org wrote:
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rules, you can simultaneously be a good Jew and believe that God is
hostile, or nonexistent.

Odysseus did not care whether Eumaeus actually believed his king was
still alive, so long as Eumaeus remained loyal.

There you go.

Christianity and Islam are the only religions, as far as I know, that make a big fuss over what
one actually believes.

.

Jeff Wilson — 28 Nov 2007, 05:48 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

The ship on Sev's tomb *is* Tzadkiel's ship; at one point, it is implied that there is only one ship of this sort in the Universe.

Do you have a cite supporting this? A bas relief of the Tzadkiel (polygon cross-section, with masts on all sides) would not really resemble a single water vessel. "Argosy" can be multiple ships and the Tzadkiel has certain plural traits, but the tomb-ship is IIRC always singular.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Nessun Sapra — 28 Nov 2007, 07:32 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

-----Ursprungliche Nachricht-----

Von: urth-bounces at lists.urth.net [mailto:urth-bounces at lists.urth.net]Im

Auftrag von Jeff Wilson

Gesendet: Mittwoch, 28. November 2007 06:49

An: The Urth Mailing List

Betreff: Re: (urth) Questions . . .

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

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Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

stoneox17 at aol.com — 28 Nov 2007, 16:50 · in reply to Eric Ortlund

I have always assumed that "quercine penetralia" could be interpreted as "heart of the (oak) wood," so Vodalus's messenger would be saying "I am from the heart of the wood," which makes sense if you think of Vodalus as a Robin Hood type outlaw (which on one level he is).

Of course, if it's like "pelagic argosy," it has another and possibly several other meanings as well. Any suggestions?

Peter S.

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

From: Eric Ortlund <eortlund at briercrest.ca>

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

Sent: Tue, 27 Nov 2007 1:10 pm

Subject: Re: (urth) Questions . .

...

As far as quercine penetralia - i.e., the inner recesses (penetralia) of an oak (quercine) - I have absolutely no idea. Oak trees don't seem to show up anywhere else in the book. Ships do, but

oak trees?

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From: urth-bounces at lists.urth.net [mailto:urth-bounces at lists.urth.net] On Behalf Of Dan'l Danehy-Oakes Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2007 11:34 AM To: The Urth Mailing List Subject: Re: (urth) Questions . . . [html][mx][spf]

Eric,

These are great questions for examples of how to unpack the layers of meaning Wolfe stuffs into his texts.

...

3) Is there a deeper significance to the code phrases Vodalus gives Severian? There's so much about ships elsewhere in the book (thepelagic argosy) - the ship on the tomb Sev rests in as a boy, the ship he sails to Yesod in - and the Autarch drops the phrase to Sev. as he's talking about the higher world Severian will eventually travel to. Or is it "just" a phrase?

There's a *lot* here.

First, when a pelagic (deep-sea) argosy "sights land," it means that the

long voyage is nearly over. This is true, but not perhaps in the way that Vodalus intends.

Second, the argosy is "pelagic" in the sense of Pelagianism: the HeiroFoos are guilty of the heresy of trying to perfect humans through natural means rather than relying on divine grace.

The ship on Sev's tomb *is* Tzadkiel's ship; at one point, it is implied that there is only one ship of this sort in the Universe.

There are no coincidences

[COINCIDENCE: You weren't paying attention to the other half of what was going on. -- Chad C. Mulligan, "The HipCrime Vocab"] in the Book of the New Sun; what seems to be a coincidence is always at least a synchronicity and most likely part of someone's plan, if only Wolfe's map of the meanings of the Book.

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On another level, of course, it's just a phrase.

Someone else wanna unpack the second password?

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

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We are miserable.

Can't we have a party? Would he rather have a party?

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Tim Walters — 28 Nov 2007, 17:11 · in reply to stoneox17 at aol.com

stoneox17 at aol.com wrote:
I have always assumed that "quercine penetralia" could be interpreted as
"heart of the (oak) wood," so Vodalus's messenger would be saying "I am from
the heart of the wood," which makes sense if you think of Vodalus as a Robin
Hood type outlaw (which on one level he is).

Of course, if it's like "pelagic argosy," it has another and possibly several other meanings as well. Any suggestions?

"Heart of oak" is a phrase strongly associated with (and occasionally metonymically representing) the British navy.

Tim Walters | The Doubtful Palace | <http://doubtfulpalace.com>

Eric Ortlund — 30 Nov 2007, 17:46 · in reply to stoneox17 at aol.com

That's a good thought. Isn't Vodalus called "Vodalus of the Wood" elsewhere?

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

From: urth-bounces at lists.urth.net [mailto:urth-bounces at lists.urth.net] On Behalf Of stoneox17 at aol.com Sent: Wednesday, November 28, 2007 10:51 AM To: urth at lists.urth.net Subject: Re: (urth) Questions . . . [mx][spf]

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To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>
Sent: Tue, 27 Nov 2007 1:10 pm
Subject: Re: (urth) Questions . .

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 30 Nov 2007, 20:16 · in reply to Eric Ortlund

Yes, and "the liege of the leaves."

(He said, making the Theoanthropos cry.)

On Nov 30, 2007 9:46 AM, Eric Ortlund <eortlund@briercrest.ca> wrote:
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