

Future Echoes: Hut in the Jungle +

The Urth list — 16 messages, 7 voices, 20 Mar 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5377>

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Son of Witz — 20 Mar 2009, 16:38

The next bit I read after this discussion was from Shadow 24 Flower of Dissolution:

"Beside me, Dorcas plucked a water hyacinth and put it in her hair. Except for the vague spot of white on the bank some distance ahead, it was the first flower I had seen in the Garden of Endless Sleep; I looked for others, but saw none. Is it possible the flower came into being only because Dorcas reached for it? In daylight moments, I know as well as the next that such things are impossible;"

Is it possible the flower came into being only because Dorcas reached for it?

I can't help but feel this is a slightly different illustration of this idea of future >><< past echoes influencing each other.

He's waxing philosophical as he describes the reversal of things on the other side of the world when he writes this.

"the seeress's cave, and thus this garden, was on the opposite side of the world. There, as Master Malrubius had taught us long ago, all was reversed:"

That everything is reversed is a big clue, right? the reversal of causation in this idea of, "flowers leaping from nothingness into a girl's fingers just as by light in spring they leap from mere filthiness into the air?" is similar to the causation reversal in Baldanders>>Frankenstein and NewSun>>Consiliator or, say, SecondComingJesus>>JesusVersion. (can someone give me a better label for that please? O-Jesus is to gangasta.)

pretty cool.

what a dreamy, poetically surreal illustration Wolfe has given us in the opening of this chapter.

~witz

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

From: Craig Brewer [mailto:cnbrewer at yahoo.com]

Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2009 10:52 PM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Hut in the Jungle

Or another way to put it would be that some myths are true only in the future. They make themselves true by projecting pseudo-false stories about themselves in the past which help bring about their realization. That would be Severian, yes?

And on that reading, Talos realizing that his situation is what Prometheus was really all about is significant in the text because it's a smaller example of your Amphisbaena where the REAL meaningful Amphisbaena's are the cosmic myths which are lies (in the past) that make themselves

become true (in the future).

Is that right? If so, then I can retract my underwhelming.

Oh, and: Gee Whiz. Gene Wolfe. Coincidence?

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

From: Son of Witz <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org>

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

Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2009 12:44:41 AM

Subject: Re: (urth) Hut in the Jungle

On Mar 18, 2009, at 10:37 PM, Craig Brewer wrote:

Dizzying from one perspective. Underwhelming from another. Or I suppose both at once.

that's interesting considering your and my first exchange where you argued that the flattening of a hierarchy of the 3 meanings was what you found interesting, and what I found interesting was the depth and hierarchy of those 3 meanings.

If you're right, then the upshot of this would be that myth (Prometheus) is a retelling "from the future" of a very worldly event, Baldanders creating Talos and eventually destroying himself, which comes to have "mythic" proportions by being "projected" through a past lens darkly. Is that right?

Yes, that's what I think is going on.

But why does it have to be "from the future"? What does that add to the idea that real events can be blown up into myths that resonate with meaning far from their original context? What's different about a myth's origin being in the future than in the past? (Apart from the coolness factor, I agree.)

It might be Gee Whiz to realize that time isn't uni-directional.

but, it does elaborate on that idea to some degree.

ie: take Jesus. Is the second coming a myth that made from "real events" blown out up into Myth, or is the actual fact of the second coming resonating back through time to create the Myth.

this is why I found so much Christic resonance in Severian, as this is exactly what's happened to him. He became the new sun, and by crazy circumstances went back and planted the seed of hope for the New Sun.

dunnoh, I find that concept pretty badass and not mundane at all.

~witz

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

From: Son of Witz <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org>

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

Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2009 12:31:05 AM

Subject: Re: (urth) Hut in the Jungle

no no.

It's not just "cute". it's fairly profound. it's literal, and it's a good example of why I've been saying the time loop is intractable.

Things in this story's past have their roots in it's temporal future.

I know it's a steady refrain from me, but Amphisbaena, Amphisbaena Amphisbaena.

He's suggesting they ARE Frankensein, and the "particular past event that Talos is referring to" is the writing of Frankenstein and other Promethean stories.

Dizzily awesome idea.

~witz

On Mar 18, 2009, at 10:06 PM, Craig Brewer wrote:

Fair enough. (Although it leaves the Frankenstein reference as just something "cute" to throw in there.)

Can you explain how it works here? Is there a particular past event that Talos is referring to that their present-as-future is affecting? Perhaps both? Is he suggesting that they're writing _Frankenstein_ at that moment? heh...

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

From: "brunians at brunians.org" <brunians at brunians.org>

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

Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2009 12:02:39 AM

Subject: Re: (urth) Hut in the Jungle

No, Talos (or Wolfe) meant that pretty literally. We discussed this when Wolfe and I met in the mid 80's. John Cramer was also present. Gene and I found that we agreed that time was a certain way, which includes future events affecting the past in certain tricky ways.

.

Gwern, I see what you mean about those being two directions of the same issue. But there's something else going on there, as well.

I always thought that Talos was really talking about myth and stories: he's saying, "Hey, this is _Frankenstein_, but backwards!" And the point is that myth shapes us, but we also move away from the original intent of myths so that they are changed and distorted over time.

What happens in the hut seems less about myth and story than about reflecting on the consequences of one's actions, but also realizing that who we are may be the consequence of someone else's actions.

Both are about how, you're right, it's hard to pin down an "original" cause or action. But they're dealing with different mechanisms: choices on the one hand and myth/story on the other.

I'm not disagreeing with you. I'm just saying that there may be different ways that they're thinking about the relationship between past and future.

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

From: Gwern Branwen <gwern0 at gmail.com>

Adam Thornton — 20 Mar 2009, 16:44 · in reply to Son of Witz

On Mar 20, 2009, at 11:38 AM, Son of Witz wrote:

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So, it's not hyacinths.

Oh. Hyacinth.

Um. Anyway, so, it's not hyacinths, but as long as we're doing temporally-reversed scenes, how about when the monster drowns the little girl who's tossing the flower petals into the pool in the Karloff _Frankenstein_? Here we have the time reversal where Dorcas is produced from the pool, and then the flower petals.

I'm probably just seeing spectres.

Adam

Son of Witz — 20 Mar 2009, 16:48 · follows Adam Thornton

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

From: Adam Thornton [mailto:adam at io.com]

Sent: Friday, March 20, 2009 09:44 AM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Future Echoes: Hut in the Jungle +

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I seem to see the wispy edges of a ghost there...

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John Watkins — 20 Mar 2009, 16:54 · in reply to Son of Witz

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Jordon Flato — 20 Mar 2009, 16:58 · in reply to John Watkins

And, if the goblet of water that turns to wine in the Inn in Saltus USED to have wine in it before it held water, that would explain that 'miracle' also...a reversal of time. This 'miracle' has always plagued me as being qualitatively different than the rest.

On Fri, Mar 20, 2009 at 9:54 AM, John Watkins <john.watkins04 at gmail.com> wrote:

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John Watkins — 20 Mar 2009, 17:04 · in reply to Jordon Flato

I started to say, "Yes, that made it look like the miracles were a religious thing--regilding things, making them more perfect, et cetera, which is not obviously connected to time travel."

And then I remembered who Wolfe's favorite novelist is. Proust. "In Search of Lost Time." "Time Regained."

Sometimes the answers are simple.

On Fri, Mar 20, 2009 at 12:58 PM, Jordon Flato <jordonflato at gmail.com> wrote:
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Son of Witz — 20 Mar 2009, 17:04 · follows John Watkins

Oh, good stuff Watkins.

when you mention time reversing when exceeding the speed of light, that resonates with some of the other meat of this opening passage, the idea of the light being God's shadow. you're sort of sketching in hard sf terms. When I read the passage I was thinking, Wow, this is sort of a hard SF idea, AND a completely theological idea, And completely poetically surreal, and excellently paradoxical.

shadow chap 24

"The Increate maintains all things in order surely; and the theologicans say light is his shadow. Must it not be then that in darkness order grows ever less, flowers leaping from nothingness into a girl's fingers just as by light in spring they leap from mere filthiness into the air? Perhaps when night closes our eyes there is less order than we believe. Perhaps, indeed, it is this lack of order we perceive as darkness, a randomization of the waves of energy (like a sea), the fields of energy (like a farm) that appear to our deluded eyes---set by light in an order of which they themselves are incapable---to be the real world."

~witz

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Son of Witz — 20 Mar 2009, 17:10 · follows Son of Witz

Wow.

The wine goblet. duh...

this is too cool.

~witz

John Watkins wrote:

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Son of Witz — 20 Mar 2009, 17:15 · follows Son of Witz

hey, speaking of other details that illustrate this idea, anyone seen a double edged sword lately? Cuts both ways. :D

~witz

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David Stockhoff — 20 Mar 2009, 17:32 · follows Son of Witz

i always took that as a straight clue. The fluid nature of time is evident in NS and many myths.

The story The Ziggurat contains a direct conversion of the slow-time-in-Elfland idea (where a moment takes 100 years, as in Wizard Knight) to space-time-travel science fiction ...

Message: 4

Date: Fri, 20 Mar 2009 12:54:46 -0400

From: John Watkins <john.watkins04 at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Future Echoes: Hut in the Jungle +

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

Message-ID:

<93d4039f0903200954r1cd8272j2f765b8ae676e706 at mail.gmail.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="iso-8859-1"

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Jerry Friedman — 20 Mar 2009, 17:53 · in reply to John Watkins

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In Special Relativity, exceeding the speed of light would not make time go backwards. Formally, it would make time an imaginary number (one reason to think exceeding the speed of light is impossible).

However, still in SR, if you could exceed the speed of light, you could go backwards in time in a roundabout way. Like the lady named Bright, you could go from point A at a certain time to point B at a similar time (whether before or after depends on your reference frame) and back to point A at an earlier time than when you set out (another reason to think exceeding the speed of light is impossible).

As I recall, there are suggestions of SR in the Sun books, but I don't see them as "hard science" based on it. They're much more speculative.

I too enjoy Jordon's idea that the goblet once held wine.

By the way, I annoyed Michael Andre-Driussi on this list by arguing with him about relativity (I think) and not mentioning till after he continued arguing that I teach physics. So to avoid that--trust me, I'm a physicist (sort of).

Jerry Friedman

John Watkins — 20 Mar 2009, 17:56 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On Fri, Mar 20, 2009 at 1:53 PM, Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:

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This may or may not be a crucial plot point in *An Evil Guest*.

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Thanks...as I said, my understanding of the topic is vague at best. I appreciate the correction.

Jerry Friedman

David Duffy — 20 Mar 2009, 21:57 · in reply to John Watkins

On Fri, 20 Mar 2009, John Watkins wrote:

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So, the superpowers are limited by previous and I guess future events at the given locus, so he can find out of season hyacinths at a lake, and reanimate someone who was alive at some time, but only if they were alive at that place the godling is operating from. Severian's failures occur because there hasn't been an appropriate history to revert to eg the psychopathic woman in the oubliette.

Cheers, David Duffy.

Jordon Flato — 20 Mar 2009, 22:06 · in reply to David Duffy

doesn't agree with

:)

On Fri, Mar 20, 2009 at 2:57 PM, David Duffy <David.Duffy at qimr.edu.au> wrote:
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My thinking on this matter, which noone ever seems to agree with ;) (though perhaps it is too obvious), is that BotNS is a dialogue with several concepts of Frank Herbert's. So, the Autarch accesses the memories of his predecessors after using a drug a la _Dune_, and humans can ascend to godlike powers a la _The Godmakers_ by being able to channel phenomena from any time at a given physical location. IIRC, the example in that book is the newly deified hero can easily destroy a object because there is always a history of superheated plasma for any location in the universe.

So, the superpowers are limited by previous and I guess future events at the given locus, so he can find out of season hyacinths at a lake, and reanimate someone who was alive at some time, but only if they were alive at that place the godling is operating from. Severian's failures occur because there hasn't been an appropriate history to revert to eg the psychopathic woman in the oubliette.

Cheers, David Duffy.

Son of Witz — 20 Mar 2009, 22:50 · follows Jordon Flato

On Fri, 20 Mar 2009, John Watkins wrote:

Dorcas thinks that the Claw works by reversing time. I've always thought that that was wrong-headed--that it just works because it's divine power--magic.

Shadow Chap 24 (Orb omnibus 1 p148)

""I would tilt it as far back as I can, until at last the evil runs out altogether," I said.

"It might be the good that would run out. But I am like you; I would bend time backward if I could.""

Dorcas is the second speaker.

very interesting. "I'm like you: I would bend time backward if I could"

Dorcas intuits a lot of Severian's nature immediately in this scene.
more, from right before that quote above:

"In my ear, too softly, I think, even for Hildegrin to hear, Dorcas said, "Yes, you were. Your face was full of beauty, of a kind of nobility. When the world is horrible, then thoughts are high, full of grace and greatness."

I looked at her, thinking she was mocking me, but she was not,"

~Witz

Jerry Friedman — 21 Mar 2009, 02:13 · in reply to David Duffy

--- On Fri, 3/20/09, David Duffy <David.Duffy at qimr.edu.au> wrote:

No comment on Frank Herbert--I'm in denial about everything after /Dune Messiah/.

So, the superpowers are limited by previous and I guess
future events
at the given locus, so he can find out of season hyacinths
at a lake,
and reanimate someone who was alive at some time, but only
if they were
alive at that place the godling is operating from.

...

This seems reasonable. However, I'd like to pick a nit. The water hyacinth (in our universe) isn't a hyacinth; it's in a different order.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_hyacinth

It's in bloom from early spring to late fall (in the U.S. all year in the tropics?).

http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=1&taxon_id=200027394

Jerry Friedman