

Spring Wind

The Urth list — 18 messages, 7 voices, 23 Sep 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5749>

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Andrew Mason — 23 Sep 2010, 13:16

James Wynn wrote:

Andrew Mason -

Typhon: first, can someone point me to the evidence that he was not born/raised on Urth? I'm not sure what the source for this is.

For me, it is based on the story of "Spring Wind". I was rather surprised to discover that it was at all controversial that "Spring Wind" referred to Typhon. But I suppose there is little about these stories that is not controversial. If it seems reasonable to you that Spring Wind = Typhon, then the obvious implication is that he is extra-terrestrial :

I have a quite different reading of Spring Wind.

Spring Wind = March, i.e. Mars, father of Romulus and Remus.

Early Summer = June, i.e. Juno, mother of Mars.

Bird of the Wood = Rhea Silvia, mother of Romulus and Remus. (This is a Wolfean joke, of course; 'Rhea' in the original legend didn't mean a bird.)

I think that one of the names in isolation could be read in any number of ways, but all three together - given the rest of the story - seem quite clear to me.

I think that the tale can be wholly explained in terms of stories that exist now - Romulus and Remus and Mowgli being the main sources, with secondary ones including Moses, the Pilgrim Fathers, and a story I'm sure I've heard, though I'm not sure where, about a virgin who became a mother with the help of a flower. One needn't take the story to be about an events in the future timeline of Urth, or identify the characters with people existing then.

The only thing that might count against this is that Spring Wind comes from 'a mountain beyond the shores of Urth', but that could just be a way that people from the future, who know about space travel, would express the thought that he was a god (just as Shere Khan becomes a smilodon).

This does not stop the story having allegorical or typological significance for things that happen in the future of Urth. Indeed, it clearly has some application to Severian - his mother was a nun, he was brought up by 'wolves' i.e. torturers, and he may have had a twin, though probably a girl. But other details don't fit. Parts of it may apply to Typhon as well - but it's hard to see how we could know which parts, so I don't think it can be used as evidence for him.

Gerry Quinn — 23 Sep 2010, 13:28 · in reply to Andrew Mason

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

From: "Andrew Mason" <andrew.mason53 at gmail.com>

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exist now - Romulus and Remus and Mowgli being the main sources, with secondary ones including Moses, the Pilgrim Fathers, and a story I'm sure I've heard, though I'm not sure where, about a virgin who became a mother with the help of a flower.

The excellent story 'Messenger' in Issue 47 of the online Clarkesworld magazine - <http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/> (click on 'Back Issues'; you may have to sign up, but it's free and the stories are of high quality) - features a girl who becomes pregnant with the help of a thistle. I've an idea I've heard of the concept elsewhere too.

Incidentally, Issue 23 has an interview with Gene Wolfe, in case some of you have not read it (I only came across it yesterday myself).

- Gerry Quinn

Lee Berman — 23 Sep 2010, 14:01 · follows Gerry Quinn

Andrew Mason:

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Excellent analysis Andrew! There are a number of mythological stories about virgins and plant impregnation (likely stories, indeed!). But perhaps the most relevant one connects to your analysis, though does not involve a virgin.

According to one Roman legend, Juno, being jealous of Jupiter's motherless birthing of Minerva, sought aid from Flora, goddess of flowers and fertility. Flora used foxglove in a certain manner on Juno to produce her fatherless offspring, Mars.

I'm less than confident that identifying such mythological origins makes the story "wholly explained" though. In the other thread I mention the very similar- Tale of the Student and His Son. We could say this story is wholly explained as a conflation of the stories of Theseus, Jason, Perseus, Erebus/Nyx, Iroquois Corn Maiden, Monitor and Merrimac, etc.

But then Severian openly ties this story to Abaia. Simply by parallel, The Tale of the Boy Called Frog might also refer to a "real" character in BotNS. In that light, Typhon/Spring Wind seems hard to casually dismiss, for me.

James Wynn — 23 Sep 2010, 15:07 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Andrew Mason-

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Andrew, I agree that there is intended conflation with the Romulus story. I think you are right about Juno and Rhea, but --while I agree that there is an intended connection between Spring Wind and Mars-- the connection between the terms March and Spring Wind is not nearly so sweet as the alias for Juno and Rhea. The name has been retrofitted, presumably for another purpose...just as Minotaur in Theseus's story has been morphed into Erebus in The Story of the Student and His Son.

When I read all the names together, it tells me that Spring Wind is the odd man out. There are other features of the story of Romulus's birth that don't quite fit either. One must ask...why not?

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Once again, Shere Khan to smilodon is a pretty tight fit. A god to /merely/ someone on another planet? Particularly in a science fiction story? Not so tight.

The Story of Frog is in chapters 17-19.

That's a lot of space given to a lark. And as a pure free associating confabulation of myth and literature, it's not an especially good lark.

Spring Wind gets a mention again in chapter 22:

"For a time, the boy was silent. Then he said, "Big Severian, where did [Hethor's slug monster] come from?" "Do you remember the story? From one of the mountaintops beyond the shores of Urth." "Where Spring Wind lived?" "I don't think it was the same one."

This suggests to me that the Spring Wind story is talking about a real planet.

We meet Typhon in chapter 25.

This does not stop the story having allegorical or typological significance for things that happen in the future of Urth. Indeed, it clearly has some application to Severian - his mother was a nun, he was brought up by 'wolves' i.e. torturers, and he may have had a twin, though probably a girl.

One could argue that Severian was brought up by Shepherds, but point taken.

But other details don't fit. Parts of it may apply to Typhon as well - but it's hard to see how we could know which parts, so I don't think it can be used as evidence for him.

I don't think it is about Severian's life. But the story relates to him in ways I am not prepared to delineate. That principle strikes me as something we were expected to accept.

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Andrew, I agree that there is intended conflation with the Romulus story. I think you are right about Juno and Rhea, but --while I agree that there is an intended connection between Spring Wind and Mars-- the connection between the terms March and Spring Wind is not nearly so sweet as the alias for Juno and Rhea. The name has been retrofitted, presumably for another purpose...just as Minotaur in Theseus's story has been morphed into Erebus in The Story of the Student and His Son.

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I think March is quite strongly associated with winds ('March winds, April showers..'). Given the need to find a name for Mars which isn't _too_ obvious, and fits in with 'Early Summer' and 'Bird of the Wood', it doesn't seem too suprising to me.

Once again, Shere Khan to smilodon is a pretty tight fit. A god to /merely/ someone on another planet? Particularly in a science fiction story? Not so tight.

Not merely someone on another planet, but the son of the ruler of that planet. And in any case, I don't think the word 'planet' is used; it's a mountain beyond the shores of Urth, which to me conveys a sense of mystery. During the first empire, when people were jumping between the stars all the time, perhaps another planet wouldn't convey this sense (though at that time, if we can trust Cyriaca, they weren't interested in mythology anyway). But at a later period, where contact with other planets isn't a regular thing, why not?

The Story of Frog is in chapters 17-19.

That's a lot of space given to a lark. And as a pure free associating confabulation of myth and literature, it's not an especially good lark.

I don't see it as just a lark. I am happy with the idea that it has application to the events in the books; what worries me is the idea of it as an encoded representation of those events, from which it's possible actually to reconstruct them. We can't know in advance which bits of it relate to events in the books and which don't - I can't believe (and I don't think you're saying) that _everything_ in it is an elaborate allegory of Typhon, so we have to guess at which bits apply to him (or Severian, or whoever).

I like the idea of these very ancient stories, going so far back that their origin is lost - where we, the readers, can see their origin, and also see how time has changed them. I think it would spoil them rather to link them too closely to actual events in future history. (In the same way I don't like the thought that Holy Katharine is an actual character in the history of the Commonwealth; I think she is the Catherine of Christian legend, her story having been preserved and changed.)

James Wynn — 27 Sep 2010, 15:21 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Me-
while I agree
that there is an intended connection between Spring Wind and Mars--
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sweet as the alias for Juno and Rhea. The name has been retrofitted,
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Andrew Mason-

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April showers..'). Given the need to find a name for Mars which isn't _too_ obvious, and fits in with 'Early Summer' and 'Bird of the Wood', it doesn't seem too suprising to me.

Let me try to deconstruct just how much worse "Spring Wind=Mars" is than the other two. June is ACTUALLY named after Juno and, assuming you didn't have a parallel month, it could be literally translated "Early Summer". Rhea Silvia could reasonably be literally translated Bird of the Woods. The bird in question was ACTUALLY named for the goddess.

March comes in the Spring. That's it. It's sometimes described as a windy month? Okay. But the name "Mars" is not in any way associated with the WINDS of March. The character's name was not Windy Time or Early Spring. It is Spring Wind. "WIND" is the relevant cognate. "Spring" is the qualifier. In contrast to Juno and Rhea, Mars' alias sucks.

For Typhon, Wolfe could have logically gone with Great Wind (Chinese "taifeng"). After all, typhoons come in Autumn as well. That would have worked. But, as you pointed out Wolfe, wanted the name to be connected to Mars. Thus "Spring Wind". Very nicely done.

Once again, Shere Khan to smilodon is a pretty tight fit. A god to /merely/ someone on another planet? Particularly in a science fiction story? Not so tight.

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In mythology, "mountain" typically refers to the heavens overhead. Same with "tree" (which Wolfe refers to in Quetzal's story about Al Lah and Aman). Anyway, Severian seems to strongly imply to Little Severian that the mountain is another planet (a great rock in the heavens), unless you think Hethor's slug came from another dimension.

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That's a lot of space given to a lark. And as a pure free associating confabulation of myth and literature, it's not an especially good lark.

I don't see it as just a lark. I am happy with the idea that it has application to the events in the books; what worries me is the idea of it as an encoded representation of those events, from which it's possible actually to reconstruct them. We can't know in advance which bits of it relate to events in the books and which don't - I can't believe (and I don't think you're saying) that _everything_ in it is an elaborate allegory of Typhon, so we have to guess at which bits apply to him (or Severian, or whoever).

No. This is an elaborate, rather occulted, _telling_ (not allegory) of the deeds of the SON of Typhon. How do the sons of Typhon relate to Severian? That's for the reader to figure out.

I have no doubt in my mind that if Wolfe had written out this story in plain terms, we would see a cognate for every little thing in story. Because, essentially, the story is "true" even if Wolfe didn't bother detail every little bit. I think it is impossible to divine (from this particular novel) things like Spring Wind's mother's real name or that of Bird of the Woods. Nor the name of the planet where Typhon was born. That's not the point. Bird of the Woods is a straightforward translation of the name of the mother of Romulus and Remus and her role is no more significant

than Rhea Silvia's.

HOWEVER that doesn't mean there wasn't a such a person as Bird of the Woods whose circumstances were fundamentally as described. The tone of the actual events would be different however, than the telling. I reiterate: this is NOT a retelling of the story of Romulus and Remus. Nor is it Kipling's Jungle Book story. Romulus kills his brother. It was not his followers who killed him. And Mowgli had no brother. The mythological elements that the reader can easily recognize merely confirms that the mythology is "true" as well. We recently discussed the Emerald Tablet [here](#).

"2. That which is below is like that which is above that which is above is like that which is below ."

That concept is a subtle backdrop that reappears in Wolfe's fiction. Or as Green put it in "There Are Doors":

I like the idea of these very ancient stories, going so far back that their origin is lost - where we, the readers, can see their origin, and also see how time has changed them. I think it would spoil them rather to link them too closely to actual events in future history. (In the same way I don't like the thought that Holy Katharine is an actual character in the history of the Commonwealth; I think she is the Catherine of Christian legend, her story having been preserved and changed.)

Well, that's a philosophical issue. I can't convince you to change your preferences.

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Andrew Mason — 28 Sep 2010, 14:21 · follows James Wynn

In mythology, "mountain" typically refers to the heavens overhead. Same with "tree" (which Wolfe refers to in Quetzal's story about Al Lah and Aman).

That seems equally to fit my reading and yours - the heavens are where planetary travellers come from, but also where gods live. I would take it that in the original version of the story the mountain was Olympus, which was both a specific mountain in northern Greece and a symbolic name for the heavens.

Anyway, Severian seems to strongly imply to Little Severian

that the mountain is another planet (a great rock in the heavens), unless you think Hethor's slug came from another dimension.

Well, Severian doesn't know anything about the origins of the story - of course he takes it to be about another planet, as that's an idea he's familiar with. But I'm not sure even he takes it to be a historical account of something that involved an actual other planet. If he had, how would he know it wasn't the planet the slug came from? I would guess he thinks they can't be the same planet because the slug's planet is real, while Spring Wind's is mythical.

No. This is an elaborate, rather occulted, telling (not allegory) of the deeds of the SON of Typhon. How do the sons of Typhon relate to Severian? That's for the reader to figure out.

Why is it wrong to call it an allegory? It is, I take it, a story in which one thing stands for another thing - unless Typhon's son was literally brought up by wolves.

HOWEVER that doesn't mean there wasn't a such a person as Bird of the Woods whose circumstances were fundamentally as described. The tone of the actual events would be different however, than the telling. I reiterate: this is NOT a retelling of the story of Romulus and Remus. Nor is it Kipling's Jungle Book story. Romulus kills his brother. It was not his followers who killed him. And Mowgli had no brother. The mythological elements that the reader can easily recognize merely confirms that the mythology is "true" as well. We recently discussed the Emerald Tablet here.

"2. That which is below is like that which is above that which is above is like that which is below ."

That concept is a subtle backdrop that reappears in Wolfe's fiction. Or as Green put it in "There Are Doors":

Something seems to be missing here.

What do you think are the implications of this for other stories in Wonders of Urth and Sky? Are they all accurate accounts of events in the 'future' timeline of Urth? And if so, are they also retellings of ancient myths (I mean, did their composers have ancient myths in mind when they wrote them), or are their similarities to ancient myths (and some real events) purely the result of some kind of correspondence working across the ages (as Dr Talos suggests for Frankenstein)?

António Pedro Marques — 28 Sep 2010, 15:42 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Andrew Mason wrote (28-09-2010 15:21):

Why is it wrong to call it an allegory? It is, I take it, a story in which one thing stands for another thing (...)

'Allegory' is not the same as 'metaphor'.

James Wynn — 28 Sep 2010, 18:07 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Me-

No. This is an elaborate, rather occulted, telling (not allegory) of the deeds of the SON of Typhon. How do the sons of Typhon relate to Severian? That's for the reader to figure out.

Andrew Mason-

Why is it wrong to call it an allegory? It is, I take it, a story in which one thing stands for another thing - unless Typhon's son was literally brought up by wolves.

Just because the story says Frog was raised by "wolves" and Fish was raised by "shepherds" does not mean that those terms are not accurate even if --if you saw them-- you would not recognize the referred organizations as wolves or shepherds.

Germans don't call themselves "Germans". But a history that used the terms "German" and "Germany" rather than Deutsch and Deutschland, would not be an allegory. Nor would an account that replaced "The Hun" for the Nazi forces in WWII. What about a history of WWII in the distant future that referred to the The Tribes or The Brothers (a similar concept to the original meaning of "german") — That is not an allegory. "Juno" does not mean "Early Summer", but that is a reasonable translation of her name.

Think of the stories as being translated into new languages three or four times.

Additionally, remember that Severian refers to Typhon's era and earlier as The Age of Myth.

Me-

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That concept is a subtle backdrop that reappears in Wolfe's fiction. Or as Green put it in "There Are Doors":

Andrew Mason-

Something seems to be missing here.

I was going to quote something from There Are Doors, forgot to look up the quote. Looking at it now, it stands fine on its own or not at all.

Andrew Mason-

What do you think are the implications of this for other stories in _Wonders of Urth and Sky_? Are they all accurate accounts of events in the 'future' timeline of Urth? And if so, are they also retellings of ancient myths (I mean, did their composers have ancient myths in mind when they wrote them), or are their similarities to ancient myths (and some real events) purely the result of some kind of correspondence working across the ages (as Dr Talos suggests for _Frankenstein_)?

Yes, I think all of that is the essential concept working here.

King Arthur and Alexander the Great were historical figures that became myth. Conversely, CS Lewis --as a new Christian answering critics that Christianity was a rehash of earlier myths about dying/resurrected gods-- said "No. He is the myths made real." Also, note that were it not for the names Juno, Rhea Silvia, Mowgli, etc. we would not readily associate this story with Romulus or Kipling. Typhon's mother was probably not named Juno. His mistress was probably not named Rhea Silvia. Those names were lost and filled in with their mythical cognates like the dinosaur DNA in "Jurassic Park" was supplemented with frog DNA because 95% of Chordata DNA is identical anyway.

These are real stories. There are parallels from myth and literature that have imprinted themselves directly on the retelling of these stories. On the other hand, the stories are --in ways-- the fulfillment of those ancient stories. "Peace", "There Are Doors", the Latro stories, "Castlevue", "The Wizard Knight" have all addressed this concept directly in their own ways.

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Andrew Mason — 29 Sep 2010, 13:26 · follows James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

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Andrew Mason-

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OK, I'm beginning to see how your theory fits together now. (Something you said earlier suggests you see shepherds as torturers - is that right?) There is some definite evidence that 'wolves' are not human, though - the Naked One says 'I have never had a son of Meschia to teach' - though there are certainly ways of accommodating that without making them literal wolves.

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I'd totally agree that 'myths made real' is a theme at work in BOTNS. But that still leaves open various ways of reading the stories in Wonders of Urth and Sky - they can either be accounts of the events which made the myths real, or they can be myths themselves, waiting to be made real. (And there is the complicating factor that they reflect not only ancient myths but also real events from the past.)

Also, note that were it not for the names Juno, Rhea Silvia, Mowgli, etc. we would not readily associate this story with Romulus or Kipling.

Do you think so?. Lots of people seem to have got the Romulus reference without decoding the names; and for Mowgli, while 'Frog' is certainly a giveaway, I think there's enough other stuff - a woodcutter, a tiger, the two outsiders who persuade the wolves to take him - to make the link fairly clear. (Likewise people have found the sources for 'The Student and his Son' without many clues in the names. Jonas helps there, but clearly he was able to get it from the story alone.)

Lee Berman — 29 Sep 2010, 15:03 · follows Andrew Mason

I am very happy that James is pursuing this line of thought. It was always a pleasure to identify Earth's myths within Urth's legends. It only enriches things to find that Urth's legends might also refer to its "flesh and blood" extant characters.

As previously mentioned, I think Severian's association of the Naviscaput with Abaia opens the door to this theme. If James' ideas about Spring Wind and Typhon can be accepted, more doors open. I must wonder about every story and legend in BotNS, though I am probably not literate enough to do the analysis myself.

I think Town That Forgot Fauna is a good candidate with its seemingly immortal old woman, the nine guys, even a mention of black beans. Could the proud rooster and his harem of hens and his divinely superior opponent the angel/eagle represent Typhon and his conflict with Tzadkiel? I find the shapeshifting elements of this and the Armiger's Daughter story to be intriguing.

James Wynn — 29 Sep 2010, 15:45 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Me-

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Andrew Mason-

OK, I'm beginning to see how your theory fits together now. (Something you said earlier suggests you see shepherds as torturers - is that right?)

I don't know. Maybe. I was only noting how tricking divining these stories is. In the Q&A, Wolfe implied that The Chapter in "Long Sun" is the Torturer's Guild. The wolves and the shepherds could be different branches from the same source. I don't really know _how_ these stories relate to the Urth Severian discovers in his travels. Frog and Fish died a long time before Sev was born. Is Typhon the hero in "The Tale of the Student and His Son"? I can't say at this point. It could be. Or it could be Frog (Typhon does eventually die in a fall, after all).

Andrew Mason-

There is some definite evidence that 'wolves' are not human, though - the Naked One says 'I have never had a son of Meschia to teach' - though there are certainly ways of accommodating that without making them literal wolves.

That's an interesting point. Yeah, the wolves might not be human. Or even the shepherds.

Me-

King Arthur and Alexander the Great were historical figures that became myth. Conversely, CS Lewis --as a new Christian answering critics that Christianity was a rehash of earlier myths about dying/resurrected gods-- said "No. He is the myths made real."

Andrew Mason-

I'd totally agree that 'myths made real' is a theme at work in BOTNS. But that still leaves open various ways of reading the stories in _Wonders of Urth and Sky_ they can either be accounts of the events which made the myths real, or they can be myths themselves, waiting to be made real.

Okay. But that still suggests a task for the reader to connect the stories to "actual" events in the novel.

Andrew Mason-

And there is the complicating factor that they reflect not only ancient myths but also real events from the past.)

Yes, but it is not debilitating, I think. I think we can safely say that the parts that are in the original myths/stories are absolutely historical. I want to return to my Jurassic Park analogy. In that novel, the missing parts of dinosaur is supplemented with frog DNA because 95% of chordate DNA is identical. This can lead to problems (as it did), but the principle was sound. The same with the stories in _Urth & Sky_. The historical events can be supplemented with myth without (mostly) undermining their veracity. Let me go at it another way:

Robert Graves constructed elaborate theories for how the Greek myths represented historical events. Well, imagine a historian translating the story of "Frog". In the process he remembers a stories about Romulus and The Jungle Books and says "Hmmm...clearly these stories are the same event." So he unwittingly does what Graves did -- reads myth and literature as an historical event. At the same time, he does what people do with the stories of King Arthur and Jesus. "Hey! There are similarities in these stories to ancient myths. Obviously King Arthur and Jesus are _merely_ reimagined versions of those myths."

But if the stories are _true_. That is, if our imagined historian did not _change_ the details that

he _actually had_ of the histories to make them align with the myths, then we still have what the historian originally had as well.

Yeah, "The Tale of the Student and His Son" has parallels to the story of Theseus. But --really-- only in the broadest strokes. Did the actual "Son" carry an alfränge? Was his battle with the ogre a naval battle? Was there a labyrinthine, Amazonian hide-out? Did the "Son" use a signal of sails to announce his success or failure? It's probably okay to make an assumption either way. I don't think those details are vital to the story.

But the ogre is Erebus or Abaia (and to my reading there appears to be some confabulation between the two -- yeah, they could be twins). Princess Noctua is not naturally born, just as the hero was not. There is evidence that tributes of youths were/are common practice among the tyrants of Urth...certainly Typhon demanded them.

Me-

Also, note that were it not for the names Juno, Rhea Silvia, Mowgli, etc. we would not readily associate this story with Romulus or Kipling.

Andrew Mason-

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Well, Jonas might know more details about the original story than we do. Also, Wolfe's characters are often able to make unlikely deductive leaps. But while people readily identify the ways that The Son parallels Theseus, most IMO do not appreciate how much of the story is not drawn from the myth.

As for people getting the Romulus reference, this is probably due to several things. 1) This list. Probably not as many people get it on their own as you think. 2) Lexicon Urthus. Same deal. 3) People know Wolfe. They recognize that he likes to interweave mythology into his stories, and they know he likes to interweave myths and stories about wolves, so they go looking for them.

However, (this is important I think) the entire novels --the lives of Severian, Silk, Horn, Green, Number Five-- are mapped over mythology and literature in the same way these little stories are. When people post on the list some close reference or another, others shrug and say "That's interesting." But they don't assume Green is _really_ Attis or Horn is _really_ John Carter. But (to my surprise) they often think something like that about the _Urth & Sky_ stories.

u+16b9

James Wynn — 29 Sep 2010, 19:38 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn-

I think we can safely say that the parts that are in the original myths/stories are absolutely historical.

Should be...

"I think we can safely say that the parts that are NOT in the original myths/stories are absolutely historical."

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 29 Sep 2010, 20:11 · in reply to James Wynn

Good!?I was going to ask ...

I like the comparison of Horn to John Carter of Mars. But I only read the first book long ago and have forgotten it. Is there any direction the connection gives us?

Certainly Wolfe must have been in a Burroughs kind of mood for a while there, given all the six-legged creatures. Speaking of which, there is a movie version of?John Carter of Mars due out in 2012.

And going on another tangent, I always think of the inhum as a metaphor for what happens when a writer falls under the influence of another writer: if you read a lot of Melville while you are writing, don't be surprised if it ends up retaining some of the character of Melville.

And Wolfe himself enjoys imitation; he did a great Dunsany pastiche once. He is very conscious, if not self-conscious, of the process of literary digestion and re-creation. It's more than just reference---it's re-working.

--- On Wed, 9/29/10, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Spring Wind

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

Date: Wednesday, September 29, 2010, 3:38 PM

James Wynn-

I think we can safely say that the parts that are in the original myths/stories are absolutely historical.

Should be...

"I think we can safely say that the parts that are NOT in the original myths/stories are absolutely historical."

James Wynn — 29 Sep 2010, 20:43 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

DAVID STOCKHOFF-

I like the comparison of Horn to John Carter of Mars. But I only read the first book long ago and have forgotten it. Is there any direction the connection gives us? Certainly Wolfe must have been in a Burroughs kind of mood for a while there, given all the six-legged creatures. Speaking of which, there is a movie version of John Carter of Mars due out in 2012. And going on another tangent, I always think of the inhum as a metaphor for what happens when a writer falls under the influence of another writer: if you read a lot of Melville while you are writing, don't be surprised if it ends up retaining some of the character of Melville. And Wolfe himself enjoys imitation; he did a great Dunsany pastiche once. He is very conscious, if not self-conscious, of the process of literary digestion and re-creation. It's more than just reference---it's re-working.

Perhaps Wolfe was intrigued the parallels between the Whorl and Pellucidar and decided to double-down on Burroughs.

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Andrew Mason — 30 Sep 2010, 14:36 · follows James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

Andrew Mason-

I'd totally agree that 'myths made real' is a theme at work in BOTNS.

But that still leaves open various ways of reading the stories in

Wonders of Urth and Sky' they can either be accounts of the events

which made the myths real, or they can be myths themselves, waiting to be made real.

Okay. But that still suggests a task for the reader to connect the stories to "actual" events in the novel.

Yes, and I do think there are correspondences between 'Frog' and the life of Severian. (I do find it harder to make out with 'The Student and his Son') But on my reading the correspondences needn't be perfect, any more than the correspondences between the life of Jesus and the myths he is thought to fulfil are perfect. Indeed, the idea of a story that imperfectly represents the reality it relates to seems to run through the whole work - Jonas and Cyriaca tell stories about the past of Urth which are illuminating, but get some details wrong; Dr Talos's play corresponds, sometimes in amazing detail, to the actual events surrounding the coming of the New Sun, but also diverges from them in some ways; _Frankenstein_ is an imperfect account of the story of Baldanders.

Andrew Mason-

And there is the complicating factor that they reflect not only ancient myths but also real events from the past.)

Yes, but it is not debilitating, I think. I think we can safely say that the parts that are in the original myths/stories are absolutely historical.

Possible crossed wires here - when I said 'real events' I didn't mean events in the time of Typhon or whatever, but things like the Pilgrim Fathers, the Monitor and the Merrimack (I think also Pompey and the Holy of Holies). So if the stories are myths made real, they seem also to be real events made real (again), which is a bit odd. (But perhaps not so odd. It is thought to be the relation of some Old Testament stories to Jesus, after all.)

However, (this is important I think) the entire novels --the lives of Severian, Silk, Horn, Green, Number Five-- are mapped over mythology and literature in the same way these little stories are. When people post on the list some close reference or another, others shrug and say "That's interesting." But they don't assume Green is _really_ Attis or Horn is _really_ John Carter. But (to my surprise) they often think something like that about the _Urth & Sky_ stories.

Well, I think there are reasons for that. First, we are told the stories come down from the remote past, and while that could just mean Typhon's time, there's no reason why it should be confined to that. Then, Jonas recognises the story of Theseus and is able, in the light of that, to explain a puzzle in the story as told. And in general, the way the stories hang together is rather odd. Consider, say, the way it is revealed in the last line of 'Frog' that the Naked One is also called Squanto; it leaves you saying 'Where did that come from?' This is explicable if it's a stitching-together of myths; less so if it's either an account of real events or a new work of fiction.

James Wynn — 30 Sep 2010, 17:18 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Consider, say, the way it is revealed in the last line of 'Frog' that the Naked One is also called Squanto; it leaves you saying 'Where did that come from?'

Well, just a joke from Wolfe, IMO.

Essentially, (so I believe) it is the same as renaming Typhon "Mars-Typhon", that is, "Spring Wind", because a scribe thought Mars from the Romulus story was the same person as Frog's father *+ +* or applying "Juno" and later "June" to his mother for the same reason. It shows that the scribes understanding is imperfect and the scribe really did not know (or thought he did not

know) the name of The Naked One. But it does not pervert the authenticity of the story.

++* This was a common method of identifying gods from different peoples and cults who were recognized as the same entity because they patronized similar domains, such as as fertility, poetry, healing, etc. Often they described how the other version was different/notable as in the Chthonic Zeus, or the Hanging Artemis. But, frequently, they would just append the two names together as in Cerigo-Aphrodite.

u+16b9

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 30 Sep 2010, 17:23 · in reply to James Wynn

On Thu, Sep 30, 2010 at 10:18 AM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

++* ?This was a common method of identifying gods from different peoples and cults who were recognized as the same entity because they patronized similar domains, such as as fertility, poetry, healing, etc. Often they described how the other version was different/notable as in the Chthonic Zeus, or the Hanging Artemis. But, frequently, they would just append the two names together as in Cerigo-Aphrodite.

Or Passilk?

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes