

Atlantis and Gonawanaland

The Urth list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 03 Jan 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5868>

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Lee Berman — 03 Jan 2011, 17:20

David Stockhoff: Of course I meant them in a limited sense (i.e., limited to Fifth Head), but they do seem to recur in Wolfe. I'd relate them to his general idea about myths, how ancient myths reflect attempts by intelligent people to understand the world and approach divinity, etc. Stories we tell ourselves about who-came-before are all grist for Wolfe's mill, or meat for his fangs, or

In other words, I wouldn't go so far as to say Wolfe thinks giants (or shadows) did once roam the earth, or that they did on Urth, or that they did on Blue, etc. Just that we humans always talk about such ideas and they hold---and generate---meaning for us.

I would go that far. Wolfe had point blank stated he considers the ancient gods to be real. Real in what sense is a question. Using real places of origin like Gondwanaland and Africa and pairing them with legendary and fictional places like Atlantis, Mu and Poictesme may be his way of saying their "reality" may be best expressed in fiction (hopefully that contradiction doesn't cause some purists to tear their hair out).

Gondwanaland was probably picked because it predates even primate evolution. Shadow Children and their ilk on each planet go deeper than just an evolutionary memory of little monkeys and big monkeys. Probably deeper than the reptiles and white worms and parasitic vines which are hinted at in various stories. There is something essentially evil in the essence of Creation.

Science is damn good tool but limited to explaining the things we can consciously perceive. I think Wolfe is saying that God (good) and Evil are such ancient, cosmic, vast entities that we can only attempt to comprehend them through subconscious processes like dreams and the gut-level apprehension of mystic fiction (like the Bible and like a Wolfe story).

He feels free to flesh out angels and demons and gods and monsters in his stories because they ARE fiction and that is where fleshly versions of such things belong. (hint from the author, I think- don't discount dream evidence in Wolfe stories).

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 03 Jan 2011, 18:00 · in reply to Lee Berman

Well, you're consistent, Lee. ;)

I wonder if "There is something essentially evil in the essence of Creation." I think certainly there is something essentially evil in the essence of Man. These are related but different; one calls for a Devil and the other does not. I do not believe in an eternal Evil and I do not think Wolfe does either.

--- On Mon, 1/3/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>
Subject: (urth) Atlantis and Gonawanaland
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Date: Monday, January 3, 2011, 12:20 PM

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Gerry Quinn — 04 Jan 2011, 01:30 · in reply to Lee Berman

The simplest explanation of Atlantis and Gondwanaland is that it's a riff on the observations of the narrator in the first novel, when forced by Mr. Million to debate the origins of the abos:

"...it is disrtinctly possible that the aborigines were descendants of some earlier wave of human expansion..." Mr. Million says mildly, "I would confine myself to arguments of higher probability if I were you." I nevertheless gloss upon the Etruscans, Atlantis, and the tenacity and expansionist tendencies of a hypothetical technological culture occupying Gondwanaland.

The Shadow Children have forgotten the name of their original home. Speaking for them, the Old Wise One mentions certain names as possibilities: "I, for five, remember all these names."

Of course these possibilities are for the most part absurd (except for Africa, I guess) - it is pretty clearly established that the Shadow Children are the descendants of human star travellers who arrived a century before the French colonists. They have forgotten the name of their original home (though they remember where it is and point out Sol in the sky). Wolfe whimsically has them remember some of the same names mentioned by the narrator of the first novel. The names also serve as an additional demonstration that they originate from our own culture or a

successor, for only such a culture would know the names Atlantis and Gondwanaland.

- Gerry Quinn

David Duffy — 04 Jan 2011, 22:02 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On Tue, 4 Jan 2011, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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An obvious typo. You meant:

Speaking for them, the Old Wise One mentions certain names as possibilities: "I, for Five, remember all these names."

Cheers, David Duffy.