

do the Hierogrammates *care* about the megatherians?

The Urth list — 146 messages, 18 voices, 12 May 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6006>

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James Wynn — 12 May 2011, 17:51

I can't find anything determinate on this. Does anyone else? I've missed this particular question being discussed.

Lee thinks they are working in concert and others wonder how a flood would get rid of them. Analogizing with the inhumi in 'The Book of the Short Sun' and the Storm King in 'An Evil Guest', I suspect that getting rid of the Megatherians is irrelevant to the plan for the Rise of the Heiros. They are plagues of opportunity. They prey on our moral weakness. Not our physical or technological weaknesses.

But can someone help me identify all the places that the Heiro-beings discuss the Megatherians?

J

Lane Haygood — 12 May 2011, 17:58 · in reply to James Wynn

I recall several characters saying that the New Sun will kill Abaia, and certainly the Megas have an interest in the New Sun, which possibly implies that the architects of the New Sun have an interest as well.

LH

On Thu, May 12, 2011 at 12:51 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
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Lee Berman — 17 May 2011, 17:15 · follows Lane Haygood

James: Lee thinks they are working in concert and others wonder how a flood would get rid of them.

Analogizing with the inhum in 'The Book of the Short Sun' and the Storm King in 'An Evil Guest', I suspect that getting rid of the Megatherians is irrelevant to the plan for the Rise of the Heiros. They are plagues of opportunity. They prey on our moral weakness. Not our physical or technological weaknesses.

We only have a handful of Hiero-types to consider- B, F and O, Malrubius, Tzadkiel and Apheta. I don't recall any of them mentioning the Megatherians (I'd want to double check Malrubius' words though). Considering the similar level of playing field of these major players, the omission seems almost conspicuous to me. The closest I can think of is extra-terrestrial (and perhaps non-human origin) Typhon mentioning that he will enslave the powers in the sea.

Despite the words of the Caloyer of Saltus (as Lane mentions) it **is** puzzling as to why a Flood would eliminate ocean-bound monstrosities. Perhaps such contradictions of logic are part of all religions. Of course, the fact that the New Sun will bring a flood is meticulously disguised, even to us readers, until the end of the series/story. Perhaps Wolfe is also saying that deception is a necessary part of God's Plan. Our destruction may be necessary but it does us no good for us to know about it.

Anyway, it is easy to see the converse- a future of global ice with frozen oceans and atmosphere would certainly spell the end of ocean-bound monsters. Tzadkiel does seem to do most of the arrangement to bring a Flood to Urth. Yesod is mostly a water world. We have the cryptic hints that B and F have an aquatic evolutionary origin (like kelpies).

There is the reference to Fomalhaut (Fish's Mouth) and so many other fishy references. There is Marc's cryptic Wolfe note that "Green is Urth" (I hope I have that right) which I take to mean that Green is like Urth so Blue is like Ushas- flooded and dominated by undersea god(s) who feed on humans.

Apologies for recovering ground already covered in the past, but in my view in the Sun Series there is a triangle of beings- humans, megatherians and hiero-types. In The Blue-Green domain the triangle is represented by humans, inhum and Neighbors. On ancient Earth, the same triangle is represented by humans, demons and angels. (with an understanding that demons are fallen angels but also appear in human legend as pagan gods).

So I think we are meant to use this analogy to understand the relationship between Hierogrammates and Megatherians. It is the same relationship as that between angels and fallen angels. One group lives on/in and is closer to the Earth and thus has more power here. But the other group, being closer to God, will ultimately prevail. One group is labeled "evil" the other "good". But God uses both equally to achieve His goals.

I don't agree with James that Megatherians are irrelevant to the Hiero's plan for self-reproduction.

I think they are related sorts of beings and I don't know if they are "really" in cooperation or competition. We get hints of both. But I think both are necessary to launch the Hieros into the next, the higher, universe whether they are working at odds or together with each other. (many have asked the same questions about the relationship of God and Satan).

I think the humans on Urth and Ushas, and on Blue and Green have the same relationship

with the other beings that humans on Earth have with angels and demons. We are the stupidest, weakest but most numerous elements in the triangle. We are necessary and some of us even capable of heroic, admirable acts. But ultimately we are too stupid to fully share in and understand the plans of our superiors. I see this in the relationship between Severian and B, F and O, Severian and Tzadkiel, Horn and The Mother/Seawrack, Horn and Krait, Horn and Jahlee, Horn and Neighbors, etc.

Our human inferiority and stupidity in comparison with God's mightier creations is illustrated by Wolfe by making it so that even we human readers can never fully "get it". Perhaps the best wisdom Wolfe can hope for us is a realization that we are not the top dogs in the universe.

James Wynn — 17 May 2011, 20:11 · in reply to Lee Berman

James:

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Lee:

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Despite the words of the Caloyer of Saltus (as Lane mentions) it *is* puzzling as to why a Flood would eliminate ocean-bound monstrosities.

The caloyer says in _Claw_ in his prayer to the Increate :

"You, the hero who will destroy the black worm that devours the sun; you for whom the sky parts as a curtain; you whose breath shall wither vast Erebus, Abaia, and Scylla who wallow beneath the wave; you that equally live in the shell of the smallest seed in the farthest forest, the seed that hath rolled into the dark where no man sees."

Although it is reasonable to associate "the hero" with Severian, it is hard to imagine that he lives in the "smallest seed in the farthest forest." He's talking about the Increate there. Why should the caloyer not be talking about the Increate as the one whose "breath" will destroy the megatherians? (I doubt they invoke this prayer anywhere but the Commonwealth.) Anyway, I think there are plenty of hints that Erebus (whose name means "The Darkness of Tartaros") has been long dead already and if he remains as a power, it is only his ghost or memory.

If the second part DOES refer to Severian, then the reference to "breath" seems to refer to his teachings (such as they are) and the enlightenment they will bring to mankind.

It is true that the human servants of Abaia are against the Conciliator, but Jolenta is one of his wives and aids him. I think it is More likely that Abaia:

-- Sees the Heirogrammates as competing powers

-- Uses the threat of the New Sun as a way to gain and control human agents rather than that he is worried about the flood he will bring.

-- Wants to gain the Conciliator/New Sun as a follower

I posit that the megatherians are "powers" on Urth, just as Typhon was, but no more than that. Without followers they are no more significant to human history than a school of blue whales.

J

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 May 2011, 20:46 · in reply to James Wynn

On Tue, May 17, 2011 at 1:11 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
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"You, the hero who will destroy the black worm that devours the sun; you for whom the sky parts as a curtain; you whose breath shall wither vast Erebus, Abaia, and Scylla who wallow beneath the wave; you that equally live in the shell of the smallest seed in the farthest forest, the seed that hath rolled into the dark where no man sees."

Although it is reasonable to associate "the hero" with Severian, it is hard to imagine that he lives in the "smallest seed in the farthest forest." He's talking about the Increate there.

Actually, I believe this prayer is Trinitarian -- noting that there are three parts to it.

The "hero" is indeed Severian, standing in for the Second Person

The one whose breath will wither etc. is the First Person, the God of the Old Testament associated (at least by Christians) with divine wrath.

And the one who lives in the smallest seed is the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, whose in-dwelling is the basis of all life.

At least that's how I read it.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

David Stockhoff — 17 May 2011, 22:48 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Yes, except there are four parts to the prayer.

Parts 2 and 3 do seem sufficiently similar to be one Person, however, according to the Wolfean principle of mythic approximation.

On 5/17/2011 4:46 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

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Jeff Wilson — 18 May 2011, 02:51 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 5/17/2011 12:15 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

Despite the words of the Caloyer of Saltus (as Lane mentions) it *is* puzzling as to why a Flood would eliminate ocean-bound monstrosities.

No more so than a volcanic explosion or a hurricane eliminating land-bound monstrosities. Water has 200 times the density of air, so you need much less of a sustained change in the speed of orderly currents to produce a destroying column of water than of air. And imagine how mammoths and plains dinosaurs would fare if they found themselves and their food web swept to the high mountain peaks and back, or even just flung up into the Himalayas.

"The Flood" is what we land creatures call it, from the pelagic perspective it's "The Surge" or "The Tsunami".

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
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< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Gerry Quinn — 18 May 2011, 10:42 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

I posit that the megatherians are "powers" on Urth, just as Typhon was, but no more than that. Without followers they are no more significant to human history than a school of blue whales.

First, I don't think the 'seventeen megatherians' were anything to do with Erebus, Abaia etc. The number doesn't particularly match, but more important than that, we have a book called "The Lives of the Seventeen Megatherians" which has a somewhat historical feel to it, as if the story of the megatherians (whoever they were) is long over, which is not the case of the powers currently in the sea.

Apart from that I agree with the above. Their intention is to rule Urth. If they survive they may well regroup and try to rule Ushas, but certainly the impression is given that they will be somewhat out of the picture, perhaps indeed destroyed by the events coincident with the advewnt of the White Fountain.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 18 May 2011, 11:44 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 5/17/2011 10:51 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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"The Flood" is what we land creatures call it, from the pelagic perspective it's "The Surge" or "The Tsunami".

We don't know (a) how much pressure Abaia or Erebus' bodies can stand---we know zero about their physiology or technology (b) whether the flooding comes from plate shifting or rising water---but where else would all that water come from? (c) how high the waters got---did they overwhelm the Tibetan plateau? (d) what the effect on nonhuman land life is to be---presumably (from UotNS) everything but plants, some birds, and simple or numerous marine life (and maybe some mountain goats) is gone. The planet is still very alive but empty of advanced life.

We also don't really know the mechanism of the Flood. The seas appear to have risen by many meters in the area of Nessus. If it's gravitational jerking around from the sudden proximity of a "white hole" then yes, you would expect some significant shocks to the continental plates and vast tsunamis. If all human life is to be wiped out by these shocks and tsunamis but for a few people in a boat, then the effect on highly evolved undersea monsters will be catastrophic as well. And since they are individuals, their survival is statistically unlikely.

This is still the most reasonable result. Part of the reason it's confusing is that the extent of the Flood is not revealed until UotNS.

Jeff Wilson — 18 May 2011, 22:49 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 5/18/2011 6:44 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

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c) The selection of the Himalayas was just for illustration of the variety of environments technically on land. I don't have any reason to think that the oceans would slop up that high.

b) I doubt that much plate-shifting is intended to have taken place or there would have been some hint of major volcanism that would result. "New continents" might be a subtle play on the

watery connotations of incontinence rather than a literal prophecy. Rising water could be driven by undermined and collapsing icecaps (which extend past Tierra Del Fuego in Sev's time), though I think that would arrive as a series of tsunamis rather than creeping floods or rivers topping the levies.

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David Stockhoff — 18 May 2011, 23:31 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Then (a) what would be the "source" of the water (or rather of the energy that drives the water) and (b) since surely people still live in Tibet, was the Flood universal at all?

On 5/18/2011 6:49 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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Lee Berman — 19 May 2011, 20:34 · follows David Stockhoff

Dan'l: Actually, I believe this prayer is Trinitarian -- noting that there are three parts to it.

I kinda like this idea.

James: I think it is More likely that Abaia:-- Sees the Hierogrammates as competing powers

I tend to agree; as fallen angels might contend with angels and God.

-- Uses the threat of the New Sun as a way to gain and control human agents rather than that he is worried about the flood he will bring.

I can't see this. The promise of the New Sun is not portrayed as a threat to humans. It is portrayed as a golden bounty, providing hope for a brighter day, greener plants, higher crop yields etc. Also a means of ridding the Urth of alien powers which are highly despised. The Flood/genocide aspect of the New Sun is very highly disguised in the original 4-book text and is only clearly revealed in the

finale of the fifth book.

-- Wants to gain the Conciliator/New Sun as a follower

I can only agree with this if Abaia thinks that the New Sun will actually, secretly benefit Abaia, et al. Surely even Abaia wouldn't think he can convince the New Sun to shrug his shoulders and say, "aw, Abaia is my friend, I guess I won't bring a New Sun to destroy him". Bringing the New Sun is

the essence of the Conciliator/New Sun. Abaia might know the New Sun =genocidal Flood. But nobody else

on Urth seems to (except Dr. Talos).

I posit that the megatherians are "powers" on Urth, just as Typhon was, but no more than that.

I agree. But with the meaning that the angels ultimately gain the upper hand over fallen angels. I must

wonder about the persistence of Juturna though.

My idea is that perhaps Wolfe recognizes the Bible (and other ancient texts) describes celestial, supernatural events from a human-centric point of view. But that, if we were wise and perceptive

enough, we could recognize that humans on Urth and Earth are pawns and that the game is really being

played by higher powers for higher stakes than the puny things we think are important- our lives and our souls.

Nobody likes to feel like a pawn. Perhaps, for Wolfe, human religions, including the New Sun cult, exist

to allow humans to feel better about themselves; hiding our pawn status and deceiving us into thinking

we are at the center of all God's plans so we don't feel so bad when we die en masse in floods and earthquakes

and other cataclysmic events which reflect the competition between higher beings.

I find it difficult to follow Jeff's ideas. I wonder, which came first to Wolfe's mind when writing this story,

the ocean bound monstrosities or the idea of a Flood? Either way, conceiving Megatherians and a Flood to

destroy them just doesn't make sense to me. The Flood is a highly disguised, central theme of the story (as

I think Short Sun reinforces). How could such a central, important theme rely on such a wimpy premise as,

"well, maybe there were nutrient current changes"?

If the whole story was meant to be naturalistic and without religious underpinnings, I think Wolfe would have

made the Megatherians as fire creatures, not water. Mother Pyrexia's and Salamanders. THEN the revelation

that the New Sun brings a flood would be a poignant revelation worthy of a 5 book denouement. With water

creatures revealed to being bested by a flood of water, I can't help but think there is a mighty deception going

on here.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 19 May 2011, 20:45 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote:

The Flood/genocide aspect of the New Sun is very highly disguised in the original 4-book text and is only clearly revealed in the finale of the fifth book.

Nyeeeeaaaaugh, not so much, if you take Dr. Talos's play at all seriously...

As for the destruction of the Megatherians: I suspect that they are caught in the upheavals of the new continents that are produced in the death-writhing of the Urth and die because they are unable to support their own weight above the water. Of course this is pure speculation.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

James Wynn — 19 May 2011, 20:55 · in reply to Lee Berman

James W:

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I tend to agree; as fallen angels might contend with angels and God.

James W:

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Lee:

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Not for *some* followers of Abaia (I extrapolate that all of them saw it that way). In "Urth of the New Sun", Severian meets sailors--followers of Abaia--who oppose Severian as the one who will "bring the New Sun and destroy everything". Severian concedes that this is a valid POV.

Lee:

Also a means of ridding the Urth of alien powers which are highly despised. The Flood/genocide aspect of the New Sun is very highly disguised in the original 4-book text and is only clearly revealed in the finale of the fifth book.

This was the case in the Commonwealth. It could not have been true for the Ascians. I doubt it was a common sentiment in the rest of Urth where the giant undersea aliens held sway (I'll avoid calling them megatherians for Gerry's sake although I believe that is what they are).

James W:

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Lee:

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No. That's my point. I posit that Abaia is against Severian's Hieroian friends, but he is personally unconcerned about the upcoming flood. So if you tell your followers that the Commonwealth (allied to the Hierogrammates) is this awful Bizarroland were they want to bring a New Sun and destroy the world, that's a good way to get them to go to war with said Commonwealth. But a power like the Conciliator is not a bad tool to have in your pocket --- both for his physical powers and the religious significance he embodies. Even Typhon wanted that (because he told Severian that if he bowed before him so would the Conciliator). Abaia is probably against the coming of the Hieros since they will be powerful and ruthless enough drive him out (assuming his is long-lived enough to see their rise).

Abaia might know the New Sun =genocidal Flood. But nobody else on Urth seems to (except Dr. Talos).

See above.

David Stockhoff — 19 May 2011, 21:05 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

-I didn't know to take Dr Talos' play seriously the first time I read TBOTNS.

-That's a decent hypothesis, but it seems to require more of a global upheaval than seems to be the case.

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Andrew Mason — 19 May 2011, 22:21 · follows David Stockhoff

Gerry Quinn wrote>

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I think alternatively it might be a work of biology dealing with the lives of great beasts - the smilodon, the mammoth and so on. I agree that the megatherians are unlikely to be the sea-monsters, of whom I think we never hear of more than four.

Andrew Mason — 19 May 2011, 22:34 · follows Andrew Mason

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:

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Actually, I believe this prayer is Trinitarian -- noting that there are three parts to it.

The prayer certainly seems to be identifying the Conciliator with the Increate, in some way - which is not straightforwardly right, but, in the light of _Short Sun_ and some remarks of Wolfe's ('a form of the Outsider'), not wholly wrong either.

Little Severian in SOTL 21 also says that the New Sun will kill Abaia, and Big Severian agrees that that is part of the story, so clearly there was an established tradition about this.

James Wynn — 19 May 2011, 22:50 · in reply to Andrew Mason

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Somehow I think an Ascan book is more likely to be a book of political history. Even if there are only four at Severian's Time (which is not required although I like it for reasons of theme) does not mean they are the only four to ever exist. There was only one Emperor in Rome at the time of Suetonius, but that didn't stop him from writing a book entitled "The Twelve Caesars".

J

Jeff Wilson — 20 May 2011, 02:36 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 5/19/2011 3:34 PM, Lee Berman wrote:

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Let me try to serve it up in your terms: Peter is the rock on which the Lord's house is built, right? All other ground is shifting sand? How then would those fare whose presume to built not just their homes but their empires on pillars of water? The waterbourne powers outgrow their places in the world until their own skeletons can no longer support them, so when all the Urth trembles with the Increate's judgment, their quicksilver kingdoms are the first to fall: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the middle of my bowels."

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Jeff Wilson — 20 May 2011, 02:37 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 5/18/2011 6:31 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

Then (a) what would be the "source" of the water (or rather of the energy that drives the water) and (b) since surely people still live in Tibet, was the Flood universal at all?

b) The global cooling of Sev's time could have rendered Tibet/Nepal/etc an iced-over hinterland with too little oxygen even for genetic acclimation by "real" people. But I would think that some of the underpeople must have survived for mythic parallel reasons, and if they made it, there's no way to rule out a few humans in the mix. Of course, Severian himself survives to "contaminate" Ushas with the sins of Urth, so there might as well be other Urth humans in the woodpile on that account as well.

a) The source of energy driving the Flood would be the tides from the advent of the White

Fountain. The only hints we are given as to its size or scale is that its purpose is to renew the sun, and that Typhon relates he was told the sun had dimmed by 7 parts in a thousand IIRC. This could mean a lot of things depending on which scaling laws we choose to interpret it the value give, from 7/1000 the mass of the sun down to zero and back up to the same figure in negative mass. The closeness of approach matters of course, but I can't recall if tides scale by the third or fourth power of distance.

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b) The global cooling of Sev's time could have rendered Tibet/Nepal/etc an iced-over hinterland with too little oxygen even for genetic acclimation by "real" people. But I would think that some of the underpeople must have survived for mythic parallel reasons, and if they made it, there's no way to rule out a few humans in the mix. Of course, Severian himself survives to "contaminate" Ushas with the sins of Urth, so there might as well be other Urth humans in the woodpile on that account as well.

a) The source of energy driving the Flood would be the tides from the advent of the White Fountain. The only hints we are given as to its size or scale is that its purpose is to renew the sun, and that Typhon relates he was told the sun had dimmed by 7 parts in a thousand IIRC. This could mean a lot of things depending on which scaling laws we choose to interpret it the value give, from 7/1000 the mass of the sun down to zero and back up to the same figure in negative mass. The closeness of approach matters of course, but I can't recall if tides scale by the inverse third or fourth power of distance.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

David Stockhoff — 20 May 2011, 11:32 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 5/19/2011 10:37 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 5/18/2011 6:31 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

Then (a) what would be the "source" of the water (or rather of the energy that drives the water) and (b) since surely people still live in Tibet, was the Flood universal at all?

b) The global cooling of Sev's time could have rendered Tibet/Nepal/etc an iced-over hinterland with too little oxygen even for genetic acclimation by "real" people. But I would think that some of the underpeople must have survived for mythic parallel reasons, and if they made it, there's no way to rule out a few humans in the mix. Of course, Severian himself survives to "contaminate" Ushas with the sins of Urth, so there might as well be other Urth humans in the woodpile on that account as well.

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we choose to interpret it the value give, from 7/1000 the mass of the sun down to zero and back up to the same figure in negative mass. The closeness of approach matters of course, but I can't recall if tides scale by the third or fourth power of distance.

Of course---the tides themselves! In that case, there is no way any but the oldest mountains could be overwhelmed, but I think you're right---there is enough evidence in TBOTNS to believe that even in the Commonwealth very few people had permanent settlements among mountains.

Gerry Quinn — 20 May 2011, 13:31 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

From: "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at io.com>

On 5/18/2011 6:31 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

Then (a) what would be the "source" of the water (or rather of the energy that drives the water) and (b) since surely people still live in Tibet, was the Flood universal at all?

What is the basis for saying the flood is universal? It is not predicted to be such in Dr. Talos's play - he says in fact that new continents will rise from the sea. The old Autarch says the Ascians will survive the advent of the White Fountain better than the Commonwealth. And there obviously isn't enough water to drown the continents anyway unless they are all flattened somehow to the same altitude.

b) The global cooling of Sev's time could have rendered Tibet/Nepal/etc an iced-over hinterland with too little oxygen even for genetic acclimation by "real" people. But I would think that some of the underpeople must have survived for mythic parallel reasons, and if they made it, there's no way to rule out a few humans in the mix. Of course, Severian himself survives to "contaminate" Ushas with the sins of Urth, so there might as well be other Urth humans in the woodpile on that account as well.

I think there must be.

a) The source of energy driving the Flood would be the tides from the advent of the White Fountain. The only hints we are given as to its size or scale is that its purpose is to renew the sun, and that Typhon relates he was told the sun had dimmed by 7 parts in a thousand IIRC. This could mean a lot of things depending on which scaling laws we choose to interpret it the value give, from 7/1000 the mass of the sun down to zero and back up to the same figure in negative mass. The closeness of approach matters of course, but I can't recall if tides scale by the third or fourth power of distance.

Either way, it doesn't really make much sense in terms of known physics. Gravitational radiation is not strong, and there is no obvious source of it except from the centre of the Sun, where perhaps the black and white holes will orbit each other for a time before merging. But the frequency will be high and will couple poorly to geophysical systems, even if it would be strong enough. (Gravitational radiation is so weak that nobody has managed to detect it directly from any source yet, although there is indirect evidence for it in certain pulsars.)

Of course, we don't know how the White Fountain was transported, and we must assume it was slowed down within the solar system, and maybe whatever means accomplished this created gravitational radiation or some other effect which disrupted Urth.

- Gerry Quinn

Andrew Mason — 20 May 2011, 13:51 · follows Gerry Quinn

James Wynn wrote:

Somehow I think an Ascian book is more likely to be a book of political history.

Is it an Ascian book? The author's name is given as Blaithmaic - apparently a saint's name, so presumably a Commonwealth citizen.

Gerry Quinn wrote:

What is the basis for saying the flood is universal? ?It is not predicted to be such in Dr. Talos's play - he says in fact that new continents will rise from the sea. ?The old Autarch says the Ascians will survive the advent of the White Fountain better than the Commonwealth. ?And there obviously isn't enough water to drown the continents anyway unless they are all flattened somehow to the same altitude.

I think the main evidence of effective universality is that Baldanders, when asked 'Who will survive?' says 'Those on ships, possibly. Those whose ships are in the air or in the void, certainly'. This suggests that not many people will survive on land.

It doesn't rule out the new continents, nor does it mean that some mountain tops won't continue to stick out, since they are probably uninhabited anyway. It's also compatible with the Ascians adapting better, if they have better ships and planes (though I'm not sure whether the Autarch had a clear idea of what the effect of the flood would be. That he had some idea that there was going to be a cataclysm of some kind is suggested by the line 'Many will seek to flee by this path if the pelagic argosy sights land'.) Certainly I don't think only the people Severian meets survived.

António Pedro Marques — 20 May 2011, 14:28 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Andrew Mason wrote (19-05-2011 23:34):

Little Severian in SOTL 21 also says that the New Sun will kill Abaia, and Big Severian agrees that that is part of the story, so clearly there was an established tradition about this.

And of course anything that is common knowledge won't, as a rule, make its way to us.

Lee Berman — 20 May 2011, 15:18 · follows António Pedro Marques

Gerry Quinn: I don't think the 'seventeen megatherians' were anything to do with Erebus, Abaia etc. The number doesn't particularly match, but more important than that, we have a book called "The Lives of the Seventeen Megatherians" which has a somewhat historical feel to it, as if the story of the megatherians (whoever they were) is long over.

To go with Gerry's scenario I'd have to also accept that the number of the "Group of 17" is a coincidence. Also that Cadroe of the 17 Stones, the black bean story etc. are unrelated. And that Wolfe labelling Abaia as "Great Beast" has nothing to do with the literal translation of Megatherian. I'm disinclined to do all that. Moreover, RttW suggests the sea monsters were well established in Severian's boyhood and I'm inclined to think their growth required something close to the 1000 year post-Typhon history of Urth.

I'll go out on a limb and suggest seven megatherians are named, Abaia, Erebus, Scylla, Arioch, Ouroboros, Jurupari and Amphisboena. Did I forget any? Maybe the other 10 are unnamed. Or maybe they are Juturna and her nine sisters. 100% speculation for fun on my part.

James Wynn: I posit that Abaia is against Severian's Hieroian friends, but he is personally unconcerned about the upcoming flood.

I like this line of thought. The New Sun's actions will allow the creation and ascension of the angelic Hierogrammates who will displace the demonic Megatherians. But, ironically, the creation and production of angels requires the genocide of Urth's humanity while the maintenance of the demon slave-masters would involve the salvation of Urth's humanity. (as Andrew mentions)

Tzadkiel tells Severian that his is a race of pawns. I take the metaphor at two levels. Superficially, Tzadkiel is referring to the uni-directional ability of humans to move through time. And I love the implied chess analogy that Severian is a pawn who arrives at the end of the chessboard (universe) and returns to the board as a higher piece with multi-directional time-travel abilities.

But surely Tzadkiel also implies that, as pawns, humans are the most numerous and expendable pieces in the game they are playing. Of course sometimes the game CAN hinge on the actions of a pawn. But not usually.

The chess analogy implies there is an opposing side (who but megatherians?), with their own pawns, whom the Hierogrammates must defeat to achieve success. As the Hierogrammates are (presumably) closer to the Increate than Megatherians, given their angelic form, we are not surprised that they prevail in the end, as ordained. So, one way or another, perhaps by Jeff's geological mechanisms or perhaps via something else, the dark side has been checkmated by the light side and the coming of the New Sun.

I find this chess analogy to be a satisfying model for what is happening above the human drama in BotNS. We pawns have our intricate stories to tell, even if we are not really so cosmically important as we think.

p.s. James, I think the actions of Juturna (perhaps Typhon, perhaps Hethor) and the words of Master Ash leave little doubt that Abaia, et al. are, in fact, trying to gain control of the New Sun. I didn't mean to imply otherwise.

Gerry Quinn — 20 May 2011, 18:01 · in reply to Andrew Mason

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

What is the basis for saying the flood is universal? It is not predicted to be such in Dr. Talos's play - he says in fact that new continents will rise from the sea. The old Autarch says the Ascians will survive the advent of the White Fountain better than the Commonwealth. And there obviously isn't enough water to drown the continents anyway unless they are all

flattened
somehow to the same altitude.

I think the main evidence of effective universality is that Baldanders, when asked 'Who will survive?' says 'Those on ships, possibly. Those whose ships are in the air or in the void, certainly'. This suggests that not many people will survive on land.

Okay, that certainly suggests it - though might Baldanders be referring only to people in particular parts of the world?

It doesn't rule out the new continents, nor does it mean that some mountain tops won't continue to stick out, since they are probably uninhabited anyway. It's also compatible with the Ascians adapting better, if they have better ships and planes (though I'm not sure whether the Autarch had a clear idea of what the effect of the flood would be. That he had some idea that there was going to be a cataclysm of some kind is suggested by the line 'Many will seek to flee by this path if the pelagic argosy sights land'.) Certainly I don't think only the people Severian meets survived.

I thought the phrase referred to a possible invasion of the Commonwealth by ships of the undersea monsters. (By the way didn't somebody say they saw a mysterious ship travelling up Gyoll? It might be such a ship.)

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 20 May 2011, 18:44 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>
Gerry Quinn:

I don't think the 'seventeen megatherians' were anything to do with Erebus, Abaia etc. The number doesn't particularly match, but more important than that, we have a book called "The Lives of the Seventeen Megatherians" which has a somewhat historical feel to it, as if the story of the megatherians (whoever they were) is long over.

To go with Gerry's scenario I'd have to also accept that the number of the "Group of 17" is a coincidence. Also that Cadroe of the 17 Stones, the black bean story etc. are unrelated.

I don't see this as problematic. We don't know much about the Group of Seventeen, but we know where they live, or lived: "Where the Group of Seventeen sit, there final justice is done." [trans.] "He went to the capital and complained of the way he had been treated." So, they weren't sea monsters - they lived on land (and presumably were human). They also make statements, which the sea monsters aren't usually prone to. And also, IIRC, only one particular sea monster controls Ascia.

Cadroe of the 17 Stones is someone who comes to fight at the Sanguinary Fields. Not a sea monster, obviously. And there seems no reasonable association with the Group of Seventeen. What kind of relationship do you envisage for Cadroe?

And when were the beans ever enumerated? All we know is that they were described as a

'handful'.

And that Wolfe labelling Abaia as "Great Beast" has nothing to do with the literal translation of Megatherian.

Megatherian = a large extinct ground sloth. Doesn't tell us much IMO. And surely any gigantic evil-intentioned sea monster might reasonably be called "Great Beast". While I don't see him being called "Ground Sloth"!

I'm disinclined to do all that. Moreover, RttW suggests the sea monsters were well established in Severian's boyhood and I'm inclined to think their growth required something close to the 1000 year post-Typhon history of Urth.

I agree. But surely this again suggests that Cadroe and the Group of Seventeen have nothing to do with them?

Also: you haven't explained why nobody in the books refers to them as megatherians any more!

So - while it is interesting that the number 17 is used three times, the contexts seem to be quite different (the megatherians *might* have been the Group of Seventeen, but I am inclined to doubt it). If Wolfe meant them to be identified, I think he'd have at least made it more plausible that they are the same kinds of people/things. And he'd have made them ALL fit, whereas it's quite hard to imagine that Cadroe's stones are actually the Group of Seventeen.

- Gerry Quinn

James Wynn — 20 May 2011, 19:38 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry,

I think your responses to Lee's points were argumentative without touching on the point he is making.

To go with Gerry's scenario I'd have to also accept that the number of the "Group of 17" is a coincidence. Also that Cadroe of the 17 Stones, the black bean story etc. are unrelated.

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The point is: Why are there 17? Why did the Ascians choose to have 17 members of their leadership council? Why 17 stones? Lee proposed a unified origin for the number 17 being significant to Urthlings.

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"megathere" means literally "great [as in giant] beast [especially wild]". Its association with a giant ground sloth is incidental just as "onegar's" relation to horses is incidental.

<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/megathere>

Moreover, RttW suggests the sea monsters were well established in Severian's boyhood and I'm inclined to think their growth required something close to the 1000 year post-Typhon history of Urth.

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Also: you haven't explained why nobody in the books refers to them as megatherians any more!

? You mean no one besides the Ascians, right?

Who else do you think fits the designation of Giant Beast? It's fine to say that that the term could *not* refer to Abaia and Co. (might refer to some entirely unidentified company), but what reason would you have for actively disbelieving it?

So - while it is interesting that the number 17 is used three times, the contexts seem to be quite different (the megatherians *might* have been the Group of Seventeen, but I am inclined to doubt it). If Wolfe meant them to be identified, I think he'd have at least made it more plausible that they are the same kinds of people/things. And he'd have made them ALL fit, whereas it's quite hard to imagine that Cadroe's stones are actually the Group of Seventeen.

This belies every thing we know about many many vague references in the Book of the New Sun. Why at this point you think Wolfe should be expected to make any particular reference clear, detailed, and enumerated, I can't imagine.

J.

Gerry Quinn — 20 May 2011, 20:23 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>
Gerry,

I think your responses to Lee's points were argumentative without touching on the point he is making.

I don't agree - see my last paragraph. I am not dismissing the idea of a connection from the start - just arguing that there should be some indication of what sort of connection there might be, if one is truly intended.

Cadroe of the 17 Stones is someone who comes to fight at the Sanguinary Fields. Not a sea monster, obviously. And there seems no reasonable association with the Group of Seventeen. What kind of relationship do you envisage for Cadroe?

The point is: Why are there 17? Why did the Ascians choose to have 17 members of their leadership council? Why 17 stones? Lee proposed a unified

origin for the number 17 being significant to Urthlings.

So you are saying that the connection is that the number itself is significant? That Cadroe would style himself as he does simply in order to render himself fearsome by using the dreaded number? And the Group of Seventeen might have picked that number, in order to be better feared or loved, or as some sort of symbol? (Like a Christian religious order might use the number twelve, after the apostles.)

If so, I'd expect Wolfe to have somebody mention that to Severian, unless Severian himself tells us.

Also: you haven't explained why nobody in the books refers to them as megatherians any more!

? You mean no one besides the Ascians, right?

Who else do you think fits the designation of Giant Beast? It's fine to say that that the term could *not* refer to Abaia and Co. (might refer to some entirely unidentified company), but what reason would you have for actively disbelieving it?

I'm not sure of the passage you are referring to. But it's not really a terribly strange thing to call Abaia - and unlike the megatherians, the reference is singular, right? However, it *still* doesn't have anything like the force of calling Abaia a "megatherian", which is still a different word, even if it's root meaning (though not its actual meaning) could be translated as Great Beast (or Big Monster, or many other things).

However in the Commonwealth, presumably the source of the book about the lives of the seventeen megatherians, nobody ever seems to call the sea monsters by that name. And there don't seem to be seventeen of them, though of course we cannot rule it out.

And again, surely the title "Lives of" suggests they are dead at the time of writing?

So - while it is interesting that the number 17 is used three times, the contexts seem to be quite different (the megatherians *might* have been the Group of Seventeen, but I am inclined to doubt it). If Wolfe meant them to be identified, I think he'd have at least made it more plausible that they are the same kinds of people/things. And he'd have made them ALL fit, whereas it's quite hard to imagine that Cadroe's stones are actually the Group of Seventeen.

This belies every thing we know about many many vague references in the Book of the New Sun. Why at this point you think Wolfe should be expected to make any particular reference clear, detailed, and enumerated, I can't imagine.

I strongly disagree here. Of course the reason I can disagree is that I simply don't recognise many of the so called "vague references" as being references at all, so the average vagueness of references I recognise as such is much less.

- Gerry Quinn

Jerry Friedman — 20 May 2011, 20:34 · in reply to James Wynn

From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>

Gerry,

I think your responses to Lee's points were argumentative without touching on the point he is making.

Quite different from my impression.

To go with Gerry's scenario I'd have to also accept that the number of the "Group of 17" is a coincidence. Also that Cadroe of the 17 Stones, the black bean story etc. are unrelated.

I don't see this as problematic. We don't know much about the Group of Seventeen, but we know where they live, or lived:

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[trans.]"He went to the capital and complained of the way he had been treated."

So, they weren't sea monsters - they lived on land (and presumably were human). They also make statements, which the sea monsters aren't usually prone to. And also, IIRC, only one particular sea monster controls Ascia.

My favorite speculation--I forget who came up with it--is that the seventeen megatherians are the seventeen beastly people who founded the government of Ascia. The "Group of Seventeen" would refer to them or to the "present" group that rules Ascia, maybe having the same number by tradition. As the Ascians are the "slaves of Abaia" (if I remember correctly), maybe they took or were given the name "megatherians" because Abaia is a "great beast".

If we're crediting Wolfe with significance in every detail, then he uses "ther" in the names of mammals. Thus Abaia would be a megather, not a megatherian. "Megatherian" could well be an adherent of the Great Beast Abaia, though.

As Gerry pointed out, the idea that?Blaithmaic's megatherians are Erebus & Co. runs into the question of what kind of lives they have that someone could write about and how?Blaithmaic could claim to know them. ?B.'s title also suggests that those lives are over; "Life of So-and-So" is usually about a dead person. These points are no problem if the megatherians are the founders of Ascia.

Incidentally, here's a post by Robert Borski mentioning Michael Andre-Driussi speculated that Wolfe chose 17 for the Group because the Politburo typically had 17 members. (I'm AWB, or I'd just refer to LU.)

<http://www.urth.net/urth/archives/v0024/0090.shtml>

I suspect you and?Lee will agree with much more in it than I do.

Cadroe of the 17 Stones is someone who comes to fight at the Sanguinary Fields. Not a sea monster, obviously. And there seems no reasonable association with the Group of Seventeen. What kind of relationship do you envisage for Cadroe?

The point is: Why are there 17? Why did the Ascians choose to have 17 members of their leadership council?

We don't know that they chose that number. The Romans didn't choose to be ruled by triumvirates--groups of three leaders gained power.

Why 17 stones?

Because of the 17 Houses of the Cycle? :-)

Lee proposed a unified origin for the number 17 being significant to Urthlings.

But not one in which Cadroe's demesne?is any kind of evidence for one explanation or another.

And that Wolfe labelling Abaia as "Great Beast" has nothing to do with the literal translation of Megatherian.

Megatherian = a large extinct ground sloth. Doesn't tell us much IMO. And surely any gigantic evil-intentioned sea monster might reasonably be called "Great Beast". While I don't see him being called "Ground Sloth"!

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<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/megathere>

I agree that "megatherian" is supposed to be connected with some kind of great beast, but not ground sloths.

When I first read Blaithmaic's title, I thought it was the life histories of 17? huge animal species--baluchithers, arsinoithers, etc. That was before people here pointed out that they had the same number as the rulers of Ascia.

Moreover, RttW suggests the sea monsters were well established in Severian's boyhood and I'm inclined to think their growth required something close to the 1000 year post-Typhon history of Urth.

I agree. But surely this again suggests that Cadroe and the Group of Seventeen have nothing to do with them?

Also: you haven't explained why nobody in the books refers to them as megatherians any more!

? You mean no one besides the Ascians, right?

The Ascians call the sea monsters megatherians?

Who else do you think fits the designation of Giant Beast? It's fine to say that that the term could *not* refer to Abaia and Co. (might refer to some entirely unidentified company), but what reason would you have for actively disbelieving it?

What reason would you have for feeling certain it's true?

I like the speculation that the megatherians are the Ascian Founding Parents, but I wouldn't use the word to refer to them as if it were a fact that I expected everyone to recognize. I think the speculation that the megatherians are Abaia and the rest is less plausible.

So - while it is interesting that the number 17 is used three times, the contexts seem to be quite different (the megatherians *might* have been the Group of Seventeen, but I am inclined to doubt it).

Oh, well.

If Wolfe meant them to be identified, I think he'd have at least made it more plausible that they are the same kinds of people/things. And he'd have made them ALL fit, whereas it's quite hard to imagine that Cadroe's stones are actually the Group of Seventeen.

This belies every thing we know about many many vague references in the Book of the New Sun. Why at this point you think Wolfe should be expected to make any particular reference clear, detailed, and enumerated, I can't imagine.

Now this I agree with to some extent, though it ignores Gerry's excellent point about Cadroe's stones.

Jerry Friedman

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 20 May 2011, 20:40 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman wrote:

My favorite speculation--I forget who came up with it--is that the seventeen megatherians are the seventeen beastly people who founded the government of Ascias. The "Group of Seventeen" would refer to them or to the "present" group that rules Ascias, maybe having the same number by tradition. As the Ascians are the "slaves of Abaia" (if I remember correctly), maybe they took or were given the name "megatherians" because Abaia is a "great beast".

Interesting. My favorite speculation is a bit different -- the Group of Seventeen rules the Ascians on behalf of the Megatherians, and one is "possessed" by each of them.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Jerry Friedman — 20 May 2011, 20:56 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

From: Jeff Wilson jwilson at io.com

...

a) The source of energy driving the Flood would be the tides from the advent of the White Fountain. The only hints we are given as to its size or scale is that its purpose? is to renew the sun, and that Typhon relates he was told the sun had dimmed by 7 parts in a thousand IIRC. This could mean a lot of things depending on which scaling laws we choose to interpret it the value give, from 7/1000 the mass of the sun

down to zero and back up to the same figure in negative mass. The closeness of approach matters of course, but I can't recall if tides scale by the inverse third or fourth power of distance.

Third, though since as you say we'd only be guessing at so much else, it hardly matters.

Jerry Friedman

James Wynn — 20 May 2011, 22:32 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

James wrote:

Gerry, I think your responses to Lee's points were argumentative without touching on the point he is making.

Jerry:

Quite different from my impression.

I think it was this that sort of irked me:

Gerry:

Megatherian = a large extinct ground sloth. Doesn't tell us much IMO. And surely any gigantic evil-intentioned sea monster might reasonably be called "Great Beast". While I don't see him being called "Ground Sloth"!

So should we assume that "The Lives of the 17 Megatherians" refers to 17 very famous giant sloths?

Here's the deal:

- 1) Abaia is called "Great Beast"
- 2) Megatherian means "of the great beast(s)" or "like great beast(s)"
- 3) "Megatherian" is not a "different word". It is the same term in a different language.

To me, it seems to be not even much of a puzzle that the 17 Megatherians are names for the powerful giant aliens that do rule and/or have been ruling Urth.

The other options are that megatherians refers to a line of human rulers that have ruled under Abaia's authority or a line of human rulers that have fashioned themselves as being like Abaia or all the undersea powers. But the various occurrence of '17' in Ascia and in the Commonwealth simply has to be related. And I think we have enough information to put the pieces together:

There are 17 recognized "Great Beasts" who are ruling or have ruled Urth. The term "Casdroe of 17 Stones" originates from a time when the 17 alien powers came to Urth and were actively fighting over territory. Ascia's Group of Seventeen was put together with those Great Beasts in mind. Either the founders originally recognized and even worshipped all of them or, as Dan'I suggests, each of the original members represented an alien power (not necessarily 'possessed' them). Now, apparently, Ascia is wholly dominated by Abaia and Erebus (or perhaps only Erebus's memory). When the Ascians say "Where the Group of Seventeen sit, there final justice is done" that refers to a human council.

Why would people NOT write a history of the alien powers that have controlled and influenced life on Urth for millenia? And if you write a history of the activities of a sentient life, then that is a biography ("The Life of").

I think you really have to understand the literature Severian encounters as having been culled and translated from ancient literature by persons greatly separated in time, location, and culture with often very little knowledge of each other. That you or I would not call an inquiry into the history of a giant sentient sea creature a biography is irrelevant. Wolfe is twisting our expectations of language to give the sense of the eons before Severian's birth.

I've tried to argue this before in the case of The Story of Frog. I think it is really key. Some guy (somewhere along the line in the Asian subcontinent) is researching the story of Frog (Ymir) and says "Look, the story of the Ymir (king = raja = frog) is the same as this other old story of 'Romulus' that I found. They just use different names. His own story doesn't mention Raja's mother's name so he uses Romulus's "Rhea Silvia". He has two names now for Raja's father, so he calls him "Mars-Typhon" just as the Greeks and the Romans used to combine the names of foreign gods with their own when they considered them equivalent. Later, another translator performs some speculative philology and translates the parents names as "Bird of the Woods" and "Spring Wind". "Raja" gets named Frog. And with that designation, a new wholly different translator says "Look! this old story 'The Jungle Book' is actually a mythologized tale of the life this fellow "Frog".

Anyway, so it seems to me.

J

Jeff Wilson — 21 May 2011, 00:00 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 5/20/2011 8:31 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

Of course, we don't know how the White Fountain was transported, and we must assume it was slowed down within the solar system, and maybe whatever means accomplished this created gravitational radiation or some other effect which disrupted Urth.

I'm not sure what you mean by undetectable gravitational radiation; the sun and the moon have gravitation, and they make very detectable tides upon the earth. The mass that anchors the throat of the White Fountain wormhole would do the same as it arrives in the solar system, increasing as it sweeps toward Urth, peaking with the Flood at its closest approach, then decreasing and merging with the solar tides as it takes up residence in the sun (making it become the New Sun).

If you mean the arrival of mass-energy from Yesod through the wormhole would make waves as the increased gravitation from the increase of mass spreads outward at the speed of light, yes, those would be fairly small disruptions per unit time, but they are not what I was talking about earlier.

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Gerry Quinn — 21 May 2011, 01:46 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

From: "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at io.com>

On 5/20/2011 8:31 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

Of course, we don't know how the White Fountain was transported, and we must assume it was slowed down within the solar system, and maybe whatever means accomplished this created gravitational radiation or some other effect which disrupted Urth.

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I don't have my copy of UotNS to hand, but I remember stuff about bells ringing etc. The gravitational effect of a flyby from a massive object would not set bells to ringing. So I thought of gravitational radiation, which is a different thing. As light and radio waves etc. are to electrostatics, so gravitational radiation is to gravity. The radiation consists of propagating disturbances in the field associated with acceleration of charge or mass, whereas the static effects are constant forces that are observed when charges move slowly, or not at all. For various reasons, gravitostatic forces are very obvious to us in the everyday world, but gravitomagnetic effects not at all - whereas with the electromagnetic force, electromagnetism is the more obvious effect, but electrostatic effects are also readily discernable. (The term gravitomagnetism has nothing directly to do with ordinary magnetism, which is electromagnetism. It is the gravitational effect corresponding to electromagnetism. Gravitational waves and 'frame dragging' are examples of gravitomagnetism in action.)

The trouble with simple gravity (gravitostatics) is this: why make a close approach to Urth? The White Fountain cannot be a large proportion of the Sun's mass, or it would disrupt Urth's orbit too much. If an object less massive than the Sun were moved to the Sun on the far side of Urth's orbit, or at a large angle to the plane of Urth's orbit, it would create no disastrous tides at all! Unless the purposive squishing of Urth is intended, the effects must come from something other than simple gravitational attraction.

I'm not sure there's much to read into this though. At the end of the day Wolfe wanted a dramatic and catastrophic effect. Current physics does not really justify it - for me the best solution is some unknown technology related to the transport of the White Fountain, which results in the emission of strong gravitational waves as it decelerates near the end of its

journey. But even these have problems because of poor coupling - by which I mean that the frequency that rings bells is too high to be easily absorbed by oceans.

I would suggest some effect caused by the irruption of the White Fountain into Briah, but I think there is evidence that it travels across normal space to the Sun, and has been in Briah-space for some considerable time, as the source of Severian's negentropic powers. So instead I suggest deceleration, which will certainly be needed if it has travelled many light years in a chiliad or two.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 21 May 2011, 02:04 · in reply to James Wynn

On 5/20/2011 6:32 PM, James Wynn wrote:

To me, it seems to be not even much of a puzzle that the 17 Megatherians are names for the powerful giant aliens that do rule and/or have been ruling Urth.

The other options are that megatherians refers to a line of human rulers that have ruled under Abaia's authority or a line of human rulers that have fashioned themselves as being like Abaia or all the undersea powers. But the various occurrence of '17' in Ascia and in the Commonwealth simply has to be related. And I think we have enough information to put the pieces together:

...

Anyway, so it seems to me.

J

Could "17" not have its own meaning as a number? It's several types of prime, and perhaps more to the point, it is a number that is not a traditional Magic Number: 3, 7, 9, 12, etc. It is a number that makes a great very cool fragment of knowledge that may be part of a lost whole: it is dramatic and mysterious.

Given the multifarious mythologies Wolfe is mixing up in TBOTNS, there are many numbers he would want to avoid using. 17 may simply be the anti-magic-number. It's not susceptible to the usual approaches to eschatological numerology.

However, this can't explain why he used it three times---why not the Group of Nineteen?

Gerry Quinn — 21 May 2011, 02:27 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

James wrote:

Gerry, I think your responses to Lee's points were argumentative without touching on the point he is making.

Jerry:

Quite different from my impression.

I think it was this that sort of irked me:

Gerry:

Megatherian = a large extinct ground sloth. Doesn't tell us much

IMO. And surely any gigantic evil-intentioned sea monster might reasonably be called "Great Beast". While I don't see him being called "Ground Sloth"!

So should we assume that "The Lives of the 17 Megatherians" refers to 17 very famous giant sloths?

Okay... but my other points were all pretty cogent!

Here's the deal:

- 1) Abaia is called "Great Beast"
- 2) Megatherian means "of the great beast(s)" or "like great beast(s)"
- 3) "Megatherian" is not a "different word". It is the same term in a different language.

You can't really identify them so exactly. No one term or word means just one thing, so you simply can't have the same connection as if it were the same word in the same language. Even with very simple words like 'black' and 'noir' only the simplest meaning is exactly the same. With a compound words that refers to some attributes of a certain entity... they are not the same at all. You can postulate a connection, but it can be *nowhere* near as strong as if Abaia were referred to anywhere as a megatherian.

To me, it seems to be not even much of a puzzle that the 17 Megatherians are names for the powerful giant aliens that do rule and/or have been ruling Urth.

The other options are that megatherians refers to a line of human rulers that have ruled under Abaia's authority or a line of human rulers that have fashioned themselves as being like Abaia or all the undersea powers. But the various occurrence of '17' in Ascias and in the Commonwealth simply has to be related. And I think we have enough information to put the pieces together:

Come on... an ancient library in an ancient world has a history of the seventeen megatherians. There are lots of options! They might have been musicians of the last and largest heavy metal band. They might have been a cult consciously modelling themselves on huge ground sloths. They might have been rulers of some unknown polity. Even in our cycle, there was one reasonably well-known individual who referred to himself as 'The Great Beast'.

The various '17's are odd, I agree. But the problem is, they certainly can't all be the same thing, and they do not have obvious connections either.

There are 17 recognized "Great Beasts" who are ruling or have ruled Urth.

Maybe. There's no evidence from the book title that they ruled Urth, but it's possible.

The term "Casdroe of 17 Stones" originates from a time when the 17 alien powers came to Urth and were actively fighting over territory.

I don't buy this at all. Casdroe is an ordinary name (one of the few repeated names in the texts I think). The cognomen 'of the seventeen stones' sounds much more like the name of an individual rather than a family surname. And Casdroe is apparently young enough to fight with an avern. Seriously, I find it a great stretch to make a connection here. Even if we suppose your theory is true, how could the name arise? One thought is that there was some kind of conference between the monsters to decide the territory of each monster after they conquered the Urthlings, and symbolic stones were somehow involved, and Casdroe's family came from the place where the stones were - but even this fails. The monsters never ruled the Commonwealth - and if they had a conference it would be in the ocean depths!

Ascias's Group of Seventeen was put together with those Great Beasts in mind. Either the founders originally recognized and even worshipped all of

them or, as Dan'l suggests, each of the original members represented an alien power (not necessarily 'possessed' them). Now, apparently, Ascia is wholly dominated by Abaia and Erebus (or perhaps only Erebus's memory). When the Ascians say "Where the Group of Seventeen sit, there final justice is done" that refers to a human council.

Again, this depends on (1) there being exactly seventeen sea monsters, and (2) their joint - seventeenfold - rule of Ascia. The first is possible but unsupported by the text. The second is in some contradiction of it.

Why would people NOT write a history of the alien powers that have controlled and influenced life on Urth for millenia? And if you write a history of the activities of a sentient life, then that is a biography ("The Life of").

I'm okay with that as a reasonable possibility.

I think you really have to understand the literature Severian encounters as having been culled and translated from ancient literature by persons greatly separated in time, location, and culture with often very little knowledge of each other. That you or I would not call an inquiry into the history of a giant sentient sea creature a biography is irrelevant. Wolfe is twisting our expectations of language to give the sense of the eons before Severian's birth.

I'm okay with this too. It is an ancient history, and it could just as easily have been about sea monsters as rock stars. The thing is, though, people know about the sea monsters. But they don't ever call them megatherians, not in the Commonwealth anyway. One may somewhere else be called a similar thing in another language.

I've tried to argue this before in the case of The Story of Frog. I think it is really key. Some guy (somewhere along the line in the Asian subcontinent) is researching the story of Frog (Ymir) and says "Look, the story of the Ymir (king = raja = frog) is the same as this other old story of 'Romulus' that I found. They just use different names. His own story doesn't mention Raja's mother's name so he uses Romulus's "Rhea Silvia". He has two names now for Raja's father, so he calls him "Mars-Typhon" just as the Greeks and the Romans used to combine the names of foreign gods with their own when they considered them equivalent. Later, another translator performs some speculative philology and translates the parents names as "Bird of the Woods" and "Spring Wind". "Raja" gets named Frog. And with that designation, a new wholly different translator says "Look! this old story 'The Jungle Book' is actually a mythologized tale of the life this fellow "Frog".

But when you propose that something like this was intentionally designed into the story, don't you need to have some criterion for detecting false positives? I mean, in principle one can make infinitely many random flights of fancy based on any text, but not all of them can have been intended, and even if unintended meanings may sometimes be better than the intended, we must impose some criteria or there is no point in art at all - we might as well listen to white noise and see what patterns we create in our heads from it...

- Gerry Quinn

James Wynn — 21 May 2011, 04:54 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn:

It is an ancient history, and it could just as easily have been about sea monsters as rock stars. The thing is, though, people know about

the sea monsters. But they don't ever call them megatherians, not in the Commonwealth anyway. One may somewhere else be called a similar thing in another language.

No. In the Commonwealth they call them "great beasts".

I've tried to argue this before in the case of The Story of Frog.
[...]Ymar (king = raja = frog)[...]Mars-Typhon"[...]Spring Wind".[...]

But when you propose that something like this was intentionally designed into the story, don't you need to have some criterion for detecting false positives? I mean, in principle one can make infinitely many random flights of fancy based on any text, but not all of them can have been intended, and even if unintended meanings may sometimes be better than the intended, we must impose some criteria or there is no point in art at all - we might as well listen to white noise and see what patterns we create in our heads from it...

Um...It's tougher than recognizing the Silver Surfer as Jesus or the Soviet Union in 'Animal Farm', but not that terribly hard after "Urth of the New Sun". As I said before, seeing "Spring Wind" as associated with Typhon (who makes his appearance just after Severian includes the story) was obvious. Anyone, then, trying to put together a timeline of Commonwealth rulers has Ymar the Just and his association with the Torturers handy in SotT. So once the connection between the word 'frog' and 'ymar' is identified, well, there it is. "White noise" would be if this original story with obviously twisted names is just so much random clutter.

Obviously, ambiguity is built into Wolfe's novels. There's no false positive test. I'm pretty comfortable that I'm right about this. Maybe I should get serious about locating Fish.

J.

J

Jerry Friedman — 21 May 2011, 05:07 · in reply to James Wynn

From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>

...

Here's the deal:

- 1) Abaia is called "Great Beast"
- 2) Megatherian means "of the great beast(s)" or "like great beast(s)"

Or, in particular, followers or even worshipers of the great beast(s).

- 3) "Megatherian" is not a "different word". It is the same term in a different language.

Almost the same term. "Great beast" isn't quite the same as your definitions, which I agree with.

To me, it seems to be not even much of a puzzle that the 17 Megatherians are names for the powerful giant aliens that do rule and/or have been ruling Urth.

To me it seems like one speculation, and not the most likely.

The other options are that megatherians refers to a line of human rulers that have ruled under Abaia's authority or a line of human rulers that have fashioned themselves as being like Abaia or all the undersea powers.

Is there an objection to those options?

But the various occurrence of '17' in Ascia and in the Commonwealth simply has to be related.

They don't, though I'd say there's a good chance that they are.

And I think we have enough information to put the pieces together:

There are 17 recognized "Great Beasts" who are ruling or have ruled Urth.

Part of Urth? And what makes you say they're ruling?

The term "Casdroe

(I too mix up "Casdoe" and "Cadroe".)

of 17 Stones" originates from a time when the 17 alien powers came to Urth and were actively fighting over territory.

I don't see where you get that idea.

Ascia's Group of Seventeen was put together with those Great Beasts in mind. Either the founders originally recognized and even worshipped all of them or, as Dan'l suggests, each of the original members represented an alien power (not necessarily 'possessed' them). Now, apparently, Ascia is wholly dominated by Abaia and Erebus (or perhaps only Erebus's memory). When the Ascians say "Where the Group of Seventeen sit, there final justice is done" that refers to a human council.

Why would people NOT write a history of the alien powers that have controlled and influenced life on Urth for millenia?

Because they have no material? It seems quite possible that people know very little of those undersea powers' lives.

And if you write a history of the activities of a sentient life, then that is a biography ("The Life of").

Usually a biography called "The Life of" is written when the person's whole life is known, from beginning to end. An example is Suetonius' /Lives of the Twelve Caesars/, the title that may have inspired /Lives of the Seventeen Megatherians/. (By the way, that comparison favors your suggestion that the megatherians could have been a "line" of rulers over my suggestion that they were a "group" of contemporary rulers and yours that they were contemporaneous monsters--but I don't think it's conclusive.)

I think you really have to understand the literature Severian encounters as having been culled and translated from ancient literature by persons greatly separated in time, location, and culture with often very little knowledge of each other. That you or I would not call an inquiry into the history of a giant sentient sea creature a biography is irrelevant.

It's that I wouldn't call a biography of a living being a "Life".

It's not an insuperable objection. Maybe Ultan only gave part of the title, and the full one is /Lives of the Seventeen Megatherians from Sprouting to the Present Day/. Maybe, as you say, Blaithmaic's culture differed from ours and the ancient Romans' in this way.

As I see it, all that your arguments prove is that your version is self-consistent and explains everything. I agree aside from Cadroe, though I think there are minor objections. But I also think the idea that the 17 megatherians were human rulers of Ascia is self-consistent and explains everything aside from Cadroe, and I don't see any objections. At this point, I think they're both speculations, and we can have our favorite, but I don't see how we can say one is right and the other is wrong. And maybe there are other explanations as well.

Wolfe is twisting our expectations of language to give the sense of the eons before Severian's birth.

Unless he's using our expectations to communicate.

I've tried to argue this before in the case of The Story of Frog. I think it is really key. Some guy (somewhere along the line in the Asian subcontinent) is researching the story of Frog (Ymir) and says "Look, the story of the Ymir (king = raja = frog) is the same as this other old story of 'Romulus' that I found. They just use different names. His own story doesn't mention Raja's mother's name so he uses Romulus's "Rhea Silvia". He has two names now for Raja's father, so he calls him "Mars-Typhon" just as the Greeks and the Romans used to combine the names of foreign gods with their own when they considered them equivalent. Later, another translator performs some speculative philology and translates the parents names as "Bird of the Woods" and "Spring Wind". "Raja" gets named Frog. And with that designation, a new wholly different translator says "Look! this old story 'The Jungle Book' is actually a mythologized tale of the life this fellow "Frog".

Anyway, so it seems to me.

All of it seems possible to me, but I suspect that whichever of those Wolfe had in mind, they were more playing with words than an attempt to create a story of scholarship that readers could reconstruct.

Jerry Friedman

James Wynn — 21 May 2011, 05:36 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

The other options are that megatherians refers to a line of human rulers that have ruled under Abaia's authority or a line of human rulers that have fashioned themselves as being like Abaia or all the undersea powers.

Is there an objection to those options?

Yeah, but I get that its aesthetic. It's just that it still leaves open the question "Why 17?" "Who did they rule?" We at least know something of monstrous undersea rulers. A reference to a some unknown rulers who are vaguely related to one of the giant beasts or all of them strikes me as random. Some people prefer that. I don't. Like the carefully laid structures in this novel that have been identified or are glimpsed.

And I think we have enough information to put the pieces together:

There are 17 recognized "Great Beasts" who are ruling or have ruled Urth.

Part of Urth? And what makes you say they're ruling?

Their various territories. They rule as the Storm King rules in 'An Evil Guest'. And Abaia has an army.

Why would people NOT write a history of the alien powers that have controlled and influenced life on Urth for millenia?

Because they have no material? It seems quite possible that people know very little of those undersea powers' lives.

I think that's unlikely. The Ascians don't *have* to follow Abaia. They choose to (or originally chose to) for rational reasons.

And if you write a history of the activities of a sentient life, then that is a biography ("The Life of").

Usually a biography called "The Life of" is written when the person's whole life is known, from beginning to end. An example is Suetonius' /Lives of the Twelve Caesars/, the title that may have inspired /Lives of the Seventeen Megatherians/. (By the way, that comparison favors your suggestion that the megatherians could have been a "line" of rulers over my suggestion that they were a "group" of contemporary rulers and yours that they were contemporaneous monsters--but I don't think it's conclusive.)

"Biography" means literally "written life". Many people produce multiple such volumes before they die. Of course, some of the great beasts might be dead already. I certainly think one is at least.

Jeff Wilson — 21 May 2011, 12:29 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 5/20/2011 8:46 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

I'm not sure there's much to read into this though. At the end of the day Wolfe wanted a dramatic and catastrophic effect. Current physics does not really justify it - for me the best solution is some unknown technology related to the transport of the White Fountain, which results in the emission of strong gravitational waves as it decelerates near the end of its journey. But even these have problems because of poor coupling - by which I mean that the frequency that rings bells is too high to be easily absorbed by oceans.

I am working from what seems to be the scenario best supported by the text and criticism that says the general scheme of the BOTNS is a combination of older SF tropes "updated" by the physics and popular science of the late 1970s then tarted up in fantastic drag. That being, one or more black holes in the sun, siphoning off matter and energy through Einstein-Rosen bridge wormholes to Abaddon, while the White Fountain is similarly a white hole delivering matter and energy siphoned from Yesod via an artificial (as all massive objects in Yesod are) black hole.

This comes in at an angle that shakes up Urth and creates a Flood because it inherits that from _WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE_ and "Born of the Sun" and other world-shaking astro-apocalyptic SF, as well as fulfilling the the mythic deluge parallels, and it advances the agenda of the Yesodis, who would not bother with such an undertaking simply to prolong the state of affairs on Urth, but instead required a new start for human civilization in order to have an additional chance of re-evolving the vanished Hieros that begat them.

And it turns out that the bells are jingling because they are sewn to a curtain that is being disturbed by Severian and the assassin; they are being rung by the White Fountain, but by the figurative instrument of its personification rather than its gravity ripples.

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David Stockhoff — 21 May 2011, 13:15 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Yes, yes, and yes.

On 5/21/2011 8:29 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 5/20/2011 8:46 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

I'm not sure there's much to read into this though. At the end of the day Wolfe wanted a dramatic and catastrophic effect. Current physics does not really justify it - for me the best solution is some unknown technology related to the transport of the White Fountain, which results in the emission of strong gravitational waves as it decelerates near the end of its journey. But even these have problems because of poor coupling - by which I mean that the frequency that rings bells is too

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And it turns out that the bells are jingling because they are sewn to a curtain that is being disturbed by Severian and the assassin; they are being rung by the White Fountain, but by the figurative instrument of its personification rather than its gravity ripples.

Jerry Friedman — 21 May 2011, 23:37 · follows David Stockhoff

From: Sergei Soloviev <Sergei.Soloviev at irit.fr>

I noticed (already at Nabokov's list) that people have a tendency to identify as much things as possible, with slightest hint as a proof. I don't think that there is enough evidence that 17 megatherians and the beasts living in the depths

are the same creatures. To me, it seems curious that the number 17 could replace other "magic numbers" (3, 7, 12...) of our times. Maybe this was the intention of Wolfe - to show that even this may evolve. Look how much places etc. are like "Seven...", "Three..." nowadays. They are not identical!

Other possibilities for 17 (in addition to the typical, or minimum, number for the Politburo):

A tribute to /Illuminatus!/ Incidentally, that book contains another Great Beast, who Gerry Quinn has mentioned: Aleister Crowley.

Or when Wolfe needed an arbitrary number, naturally he picked 17. So did my my Mathematical Logic professor in about 1982. Finally someone asked him why, and he explained.

First of all, it's obvious that numbers greater than about twenty are too big to be arbitrary. Second, odd numbers are clearly more arbitrary than even ones. One is too singular. Three is the number of the Trinity, so it's not arbitrary. Five is the number of fingers on the human hand and consequently the basis of our number system. Seven and eleven are naturals in craps. Nine is three squared. Thirteen is an unlucky number and the number of the original American colonies. Fifteen is a multiple of both three and five. And nineteen is really too close to twenty.

I seem to remember having the feeling I'd heard that before, so it could have been folklore that Wolfe encountered somewhere.

Jerry Friedman

Lee Berman — 21 May 2011, 23:44 · follows Jerry Friedman

James Wynn: I think your responses to Lee's points were argumentative without touching on the point he is making.

This is in Gerry's nature and I think I can accept that. Harping on the "giant sloth" bit was an error (the correct term for that creature is "megatheriam") but what bothers me is the attempt at using it for reductio ad absurdum. To me that is a dirty trick to play on a fellow member of the small group of passionate Wolfe fans. Why not be respectful of those with whom you share such a narrow interest? But if you can't you can't. I have this one cousin who...well, anyway. Regardless of his abrasive nature I will always consider him part of the family. Gerry also.

James I agree with your negative evidence comment. Why wasn't it Group of 19 and Cadroe of the 13 Stones? I think Wolfe is a careful writer. If he didn't want his readers to connect Megatherians with Ascians rulers and Cadroe's stones I think he would have made the effort to not throw a bunch of 17's at us, assuring that this discussion would never occur. Surely he cares at least that much about us.

I have always liked the suggestion that the number 17 had some reference to communism. The Politburo suggestion is a good one. I've contorted the number of existing communist nations on earth in the 70's at 17, as another attempt to find some meaning.

The thing is, that does nothing to negate other connections. In fact I would expect Wolfe's somewhat persistent use of that number to have a simultaneous mythological, a political and perhaps a personal significance. Even Gerry, with his insistence on simplified explanations, has admitted that Wolfe often writes at multiple levels of meaning and understanding.

Anyway, for me the connector of Cadroe's stones to the black bean (megatherian origin) story is the conversation of Severian and Agilus. There, the terms "seeds" and "stones" are connected. The connection between beans and seeds isn't hard to make. The overall picture it paints of megatherians (and hierogrammates) is a coherent and poignant one, as I think my chess game analogy earlier illustrates.

For me, it was a revelation when I learned that Wolfe didn't invent any of the terms or names he uses in BotNS. It would certainly diminish the story for me if I thought he was throwing a numeral at us over and over for no reason or as a red herring. For me, Wolfe creates his mystery not with a bunch of false paths but by making the true path so difficult to follow.

p.s. Like David I also like the observation that the ringing of the bells is a figurative expression that the New Sun person is disturbing the curtain as the New Sun celestial body is disturbing Urth.

David Stockhoff — 22 May 2011, 00:16 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Exactly my point.

On 5/21/2011 7:37 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: Sergei Soloviev<Sergei.Soloviev at irit.fr>

I noticed (already at Nabokov's list) that people have a tendency to identify as much things as possible, with slightest hint as a proof. I don't think that there is enough evidence that 17 megatherians and the beasts living in the depths

are the same creatures. To me, it seems curious that the number 17 could replace other "magic numbers" (3, 7, 12...) of our times. Maybe this was

the intention of Wolfe - to show that even this may evolve. Look how much places etc. are like "Seven...", "Three..." nowadays. They are not identical!

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Or when Wolfe needed an arbitrary number, naturally he picked 17. So did my my Mathematical Logic professor in about 1982. Finally someone asked him why, and he explained.

First of all, it's obvious that numbers greater than about twenty are too big to be arbitrary. Second, odd numbers are clearly more arbitrary than even ones. One is too singular. Three is the number of the Trinity, so it's not arbitrary. Five is the number of fingers on the human hand and consequently the basis of our number system. Seven and eleven are naturals in craps. Nine is three squared. Thirteen is an unlucky number and the number of the original American colonies. Fifteen is a multiple of both three and five. And nineteen is really too close to twenty.

I seem to remember having the feeling I'd heard that before, so it could have been folklore that Wolfe encountered somewhere.

Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman — 22 May 2011, 00:52 · in reply to James Wynn

From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>

The other options are that megatherians refers to a line of human rulers that have ruled under Abaia's authority or a line of human rulers that have fashioned themselves as being like Abaia or all the undersea powers.

Is there an objection to those options?

Yeah, but I get that its aesthetic. It's just that it still leaves open the question "Why 17?" "Who did they rule?" We at least know something of monstrous undersea rulers. A reference to a some unknown rulers who are vaguely related to one of the giant beasts or all of them strikes me as random. Some people prefer that. I don't. Like the carefully laid structures in this novel that have been identified or are glimpsed.

Okay, is there an objection to the idea that the "megatherian" human rulers were early rulers of Ascia?

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And I think we have enough information to put the pieces together:

There are 17 recognized "Great Beasts" who are ruling or have ruled Urth.

Part of Urth? And what makes you say they're ruling?

Their various territories. They rule as the Storm King rules in 'An Evil Guest'. And Abaia has an army.

Okay, that's one.

Why would people NOT write a history of the alien powers that have controlled and influenced life on Urth for millenia?

Because they have no material? It seems quite possible that people know very little of those undersea powers' lives.

I think that's unlikely. The Ascians don't *have* to follow Abaia. They choose to (or originally chose to) for rational reasons.

Interesting. That never occurred to me. I always imagined that the Ascians knew no more about Abaia's life than Lovecraft's characters knew about the life stories of Yog-Sothoth and Nyarlathotep.

Severian tells us, as I recall, that Abaia et al. could kill all the humans in the world but don't do so because they want to enslave everyone. This suggests the possibility that they threatened the Ascians or just the future Ascian leaders, who went along. I guess you could call that "rational reasons". The Commonwealth, however, called their bluff. Or maybe the sea creatures possessed the rulers of Ascia, as Dan'l suggested. I don't see any hint that the Ascians decided to follow Abaia because of his impressive CV.

I think we'll have to disagree about what "Lives of" could mean.

Jerry Friedman

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 22 May 2011, 12:10 · follows Jerry Friedman

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Best

Sergei

Le Dimanche 22 Mai 2011 02:52 CEST, Jerry Friedman
<jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> a ?crit:

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David Stockhoff — 22 May 2011, 13:25 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 5/21/2011 8:52 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

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Jerry Friedman

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David Stockhoff — 22 May 2011, 13:47 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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Gerry Quinn — 22 May 2011, 14:22 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

Gerry Quinn:

It is an ancient history, and it could just as easily have been about sea

monsters as rock stars. The thing is, though, people know about the sea monsters. But they don't ever call them megatherians, not in the Commonwealth anyway. One may somewhere else be called a similar thing in another language.

No. In the Commonwealth they call them "great beasts".

Because they are great and beastly. It's one of various things they are called. They would call large wolves or something great beasts too. What they do **not** say are things like "Abaia and the other Megatherians..." or "Abaia and his sixteen brothers..." or anything like that.

I've tried to argue this before in the case of The Story of Frog.
[...]Ymar (king = raja = frog)[...] "Mars-Typhon"[...] "Spring Wind". [...]

But when you propose that something like this was intentionally designed into the story, don't you need to have some criterion for detecting false positives? I mean, in principle one can make infinitely many random flights of fancy based on any text, but not all of them can have been intended, and even if unintended meanings may sometimes be better than the intended, we must impose some criteria or there is no point in art at all - we might as well listen to white noise and see what patterns we create in our heads from it...

Um...It's tougher than recognizing the Silver Surfer as Jesus or the Soviet Union in 'Animal Farm', but not that terribly hard after "Urth of the New Sun". As I said before, seeing "Spring Wind" as associated with Typhon (who makes his appearance just after Severian includes the story) was obvious. Anyone, then, trying to put together a timeline of Commonwealth rulers has Ymar the Just and his association with the Torturers handy in SoT. So once the connection between the word 'frog' and 'ymar' is identified, well, there it is. "White noise" would be if this original story with obviously twisted names is just so much random clutter.

I looked up your posts on the subject of Frog. To be candid, I find it difficult to tease out a specific theory. Your most recent one said:

Not really. But Rana works nicely for the story. It's located in a constellation that was traditionally seen as a stream. And there's a "Basket" star in that constellation. As for Fish....well, the fish is hard. I can imagine that Frog is a translation for an alternative word for "raja": that is, **Rana**. If so arguably Frog, in this story, is Ymar. The first Autarch. ...

But it still does not identify anyone for me in the stories that can be directly associated with "Fish".

I'm sorry, but IMO this isn't a strong connection. If you accept such loose "connections" you can find support for any theory whatsoever.

You've posited theories, or variations on a theory, in which Fish and Frog became Silk, Severian, Typhon, clones of Typhon, Severian's long-lost twin...

But whatever about names, the content is important. When I read the story, I don't recognise Severian or Typhon, or Silk. Spring Wind was a great general like Typhon, but had a few notable differences from him too. And that's about the **only** halfway close correspondence I can see. Fish and Frog - where's the connection?

There are some interesting bits in regard to the name of Frog, incidentally. Early we are told how he got his name:

Because they had been found in the water, the boys were named Fish and Frog "I shall call him Frog," said the she-wolf. "For indeed the Butcher angled for frogs, as you said, O my husband." She believed that she said this in compliment to the he-wolf, because he had so readily acquiesced to her wishes; but the truth was that the blood of the people of the mountaintop beyond Urth ran in Frog, and the names of those who bear the blood cannot be concealed for long.

Could be read either way... the name Frog might be significant in itself, or not. The twins were never named by their mother. [The alien origins are mentioned... if we take certain elements of the tale literally, it seems plausible that Spring Wind was born on a large space station of some kind, or maybe Lune ("a mountaintop beyond Urth", and the battles were on the planets and satellites of the Solar System (for if the mountaintop were not near Urth, how could Urth's astrologers read the stars of that place? Of course Frog's origins are doubly alien - he is one-quarter the mysterious flower.)]

But anyway, the story of Frog seems to have nothing particular in common with the life of Ymar (what little we know of it).

So who is Frog? Quite clearly, I think, he is Romulus. There are multiple very close and clear parallels within the story: the basket, the raising by wolves, the Sabine women, the city wall, the murdered twin brother. Almost as clear is the part-divine ancestry (in which I think Wolfe merged two common variations).

Just like the story of the Student, it's a mash-up of ancient and more recent mythology (somebody noted on some board, perhaps correctly, that the Student also includes the Battle of Hampton Roads, with the Minotaur becoming the Monitor), combined with added stories by Wolfe, and futuristic technological trappings. The idea is that the tales mutate and pick up elements of the time(s) when they are re-told.

Now of course it's possible that the stories would pick up elements from the history of Typhon etc. But they could pick up elements from a thousand places, and there doesn't seem to be anything that *tells* us about Typhon. At most, I think, his name - itself mutated - has been tossed in when the story needed a great general. But the name aside there are inconsistencies regarding his life story. He doesn't seem at all the Typhon we know.

And the story itself: is basically a mutation of the story of Romulus. Not of Typhon, Severian or Silk.

Obviously, ambiguity is built into Wolfe's novels. There's no false positive test. I'm pretty comfortable that I'm right about this. Maybe I should get serious about locating Fish.

Remus, obviously.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 22 May 2011, 14:24 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

From: "Jeff Wilson" <jwilson at io.com>

On 5/20/2011 8:46 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

I'm not sure there's much to read into this though. At the end of the day Wolfe wanted a dramatic and catastrophic effect. Current physics does not really justify it - for me the best solution is some unknown technology related to the transport of the White Fountain, which results in the emission of strong gravitational waves as it decelerates near the end of its journey. But even these have problems because of poor coupling - by which I mean that the frequency that rings bells is too high to be easily absorbed by oceans.

I am working from what seems to be the scenario best supported by the text and criticism that says the general scheme of the BOTNS is a combination of older SF tropes "updated" by the physics and popular science of the late 1970s then tarted up in fantastic drag. That being, one or more black holes in the sun, siphoning off matter and energy through Einstein-Rosen bridge wormholes to Abaddon, while the White Fountain is similarly a white hole delivering matter and energy siphoned from Yesod via an artificial (as all massive objects in Yesod are) black hole.

This comes in at an angle that shakes up Urth and creates a Flood because it inherits that from *_WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE_* and "Born of the Sun" and other world-shaking astro-apocalyptic SF, as well as fulfilling the the mythic deluge parallels, and it advances the agenda of the Yesodis, who would not bother with such an undertaking simply to prolong the state of affairs on Urth, but instead required a new start for human civilization in order to have an additional chance of re-evolving the vanished Hieros that begat them.

Yes, I agree. Fiction first, science second.

And it turns out that the bells are jingling because they are sewn to a curtain that is being disturbed by Severian and the assassin; they are being rung by the White Fountain, but by the figurative instrument of its personification rather than its gravity ripples.

Ah, I see.

- Gerry Quinn

Jerry Friedman — 22 May 2011, 15:23 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

From: Gerry Quinn <gerryq at indigo.ie>

...

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Monitor), combined with added stories by Wolfe, and futuristic technological trappings. The idea is that the tales mutate and pick up elements of the time(s) when they are re-told.

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I trust somebody has mentioned Lovecraft's "Shadow Over Innsmouth", with its "fish-frog" creatures from under the ocean who mate with people and whose blood eventually reveals itself (though I don't think their names do). They worship Cthulhu, who's from "the stars", though I don't think it's clear whether the fish-frogs themselves are native to Earth or another planet.

James> > Obviously, ambiguity is built into Wolfe's novels. There's no false positive test. I'm pretty comfortable that I'm right about this. Maybe I should get serious about locating Fish.

Remus, obviously.

Which brings us, appropriately or not, to the Tar Baby.

Jerry Friedman

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 22 May 2011, 16:14 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

There are obviously also the elements of "Jungle Book" by Kipling, the story of "man cub" Mowgli <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mowgli>> who is raised by wolves in the Indian jungle -

Sergei

Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: Gerry Quinn <gerryq@indigo.ie>

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Jeff Wilson — 22 May 2011, 17:00 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 5/22/2011 8:47 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

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I'd pay good money to see that football game.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com

Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana

< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Nathan C. Tresch — 22 May 2011, 17:06 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Thank you, David.

On Sun, May 22, 2011 at 6:47 AM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

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Jerry Friedman — 22 May 2011, 17:12 · follows Nathan C. Tresch

From: Sergei Soloviev <Sergei.Soloviev at irit.fr>

I would like to slow down the growth of one more myth - what is the source of the idea

that the number of the members of Politburo was 17? First of all, the "norm" changed several times. The first one, in 1917, had, as far as I remember, 7 members. Then the number varied - from 8 (in 1920-es) to 25 (in 1970-es). That is, in the USSR. In China, it varied as well, between 19 and 25.

Along these lines, Michael Andre-Driussi writes in LU, "The number seventeen alludes to the Soviet politburo, which typically had seventeen members (eleven to twelve full members and six to nine alternate members)." So even based on that, the connection of 17 to the politburo is a good deal weaker than I thought from Robert Borski's article.

To me the expression "group of 17" has somewhat Chinese flavour - like "gang of four" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gang_of_Four (nowadays there is also a rock group with this name).

(Formed in 1977, says Wikipedia, and now performing again.)

Jerry Friedman

Jack Smith — 22 May 2011, 18:01 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

I agree that the number 17 being connected to the Soviet poliburo is probably a myth. I've seen it repeated many times but no source is ever given.

Does anyone have a Soviet or Communist reference? If not, we should probably drop it.

On Sun, May 22, 2011 at 8:10 AM, Sergei SOLOVIEV <soloviev at irit.fr> wrote:
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Best

Sergei

Le Dimanche 22 Mai 2011 02:52 CEST, Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> a "crit:

> From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>

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Their various territories. They rule as the Storm King rules in 'An Evil >Guest'. And Abaia has an army.

Okay, that's one.

> >> Why would people NOT write a history of the alien powers that have controlled and influenced life on Urth for millenia?

Because they have no material? It seems quite possible that people know >very

little of those undersea powers' lives.

I think that's unlikely. The Ascians don't *have* to follow Abaia.

They choose >to (or originally chose to) for rational reasons.

Interesting. That never occurred to me. I always imagined that the Ascians knew no more about Abaia's life than Lovecraft's characters knew about the life stories of Yog-Sothoth and Nyarlathotep.

Severian tells us, as I recall, that Abaia et al. could kill all the humans in the world but don't do so because they want to enslave everyone. This suggests the possibility that they threatened the Ascians or just the future Ascian leaders, who went along. I guess you could call that "rational reasons". The Commonwealth, however, called their bluff. Or maybe the sea creatures possessed the rulers of Ascia, as Dan'I suggested. I don't see any hint that the Ascians decided to follow Abaia because of his impressive CV.

I think we'll have to disagree about what "Lives of" could mean.

Jerry Friedman

David Stockhoff — 22 May 2011, 18:06 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Right. I think the "meaning" of 17 in this case is rather self-contained: one communist Ruling Group is related to another, with a touch of Yellow Peril thrown in.

On 5/22/2011 1:12 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: Sergei Soloviev<Sergei.Soloviev at irit.fr>

I would like to slow down the growth of one more myth - what is the source of the idea

that the number of the memebbers of Politburo was 17? First of all, the "norm" changed

several times. The first one, in 1917, had, as far as I remember, 7 members.

Then the number varied - from 8 (in 1920-es) to 25 (in 1970-es). That is, in the

USSR. In China, it varied as well, between 19 and 25.

Along these lines, Michael Andre-Driussi writes in LU, "The number seventeen alludes to the Soviet politburo, which typically had seventeen members (eleven to twelve full members and six to nine alternate members)." So even based on that, the connection of 17 to the politburo is a good deal weaker than I thought from Robert Borski's article.

To me the expression

"group of 17" has somewhat Chinese flavour - like "gang of four"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gang_of_Four (nowadays there is also a rock group with this name).

(Formed in 1977, says Wikipedia, and now performing again.)

Jerry Friedman

Jeff Wilson — 22 May 2011, 18:18 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

On 5/22/2011 7:10 AM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:

I would like to slow down the growth of one more myth - what is the source of the idea

that the number of the memebbers of Politburo was 17? First of all, the "norm" changed

several times. The first one, in 1917, had, as far as I remember, 7 members.

Then the number varied - from 8 (in 1920-es) to 25 (in 1970-es). That is, in the USSR.

I first saw it in the original LEXICON URTHUS. I work with some former Soviet residence professors, I'll try to catch one and ask.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com

Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana

< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Gerry Quinn — 22 May 2011, 18:25 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>

James Wynn: I think your responses to Lee's points were argumentative without

touching on the point he is making.

This is in Gerry's nature and I think I can accept that. Harping on the "giant sloth" bit was an error (the correct term for that creature is "megatheriam") but what bothers me is the attempt at using it for reductio ad absurdum. To me that is a dirty trick to play on a fellow member of the small group of passionate Wolfe fans. Why not be respectful of those with whom you share such a narrow interest? But if you can't you can't. I have this one cousin who...well, anyway. Regardless of his abrasive nature I will always consider him part of the family. Gerry also.

I would call it sarcasm rather than reductio ad absurdum. Perhaps I should not have put it that way, but I was making a real point. Type 'megatherian' into any online dictionary, and 'giant extinct ground sloth' is what you get. Even if the iconic creature is known as 'megatherium', it's family are the megatherians.

[By the way, I'd personally sooner be noted for occasional sarcasm rather than opportunistic ad hominem sniping of the above kind.]

Now it is pretty evident that Wolfe did not mean ground sloths, and probably the 17 Megatherians are some line of human rulers, monsters, or humans who were for some reason called 'great beasts'. It is conceivable, though I will admit unlikely, that they were a line of hermits who modelled themselves after ground sloths, or a heavy metal rock band (if you saw an announcement "Coming Soon, The Megatherians" would you fear Abaia, or ear-splitting noise?). Given that the sea monsters aren't known or suggested to number 17, I don't see how they can be so blithely identified with them.

Also, the title simply doesn't ring true to me if that is who/what they are. Apart from the slight connotation of historicity, "Lives of" is a little too cosy an expression to use for such monsters. Of course it can be used as in "Lives of the Great Cats" or whatever, but this is describing something that would be seen as natural and normal. Nobody would write "Life of Chulthu", or "Life of Satan". "History of", maybe. It's not proof or anything like it, but I find it hard to believe that the sea monsters are even a strong possibility.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 22 May 2011, 19:09 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Basically the same point I made at 9:25 this morning.

But I would like to see (though not necessarily hear) a band called "The Megatherians."

On 5/22/2011 2:25 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>
James Wynn: I think your responses to Lee's points were argumentative without touching on the point he is making.

This is in Gerry's nature and I think I can accept that. Harping on the "giant sloth" bit was an error (the correct term for that creature is "megatheriam") but what bothers me is the attempt at using it for reductio ad absurdum.

To me that is
a dirty trick to play on a fellow member of the small group of
passionate Wolfe fans.
Why not be respectful of those with whom you share such a narrow
interest? But if you
can't you can't. I have this one cousin who...well, anyway.
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should not have put it that way, but I was making a real point. Type
'megatherian' into any online dictionary, and 'giant extinct ground
sloth' is what you get. Even if the iconic creature is known as
'megatherium', it's family are the megatherians.

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rock band (if you saw an announcement "Coming Soon, The Megatherians"
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"History of", maybe. It's not proof or anything like it, but I find
it hard to believe that the sea monsters are even a strong possibility.

- Gerry Quinn

Jerry Friedman — 22 May 2011, 19:41 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

From: Gerry Quinn <gerryq at indigo.ie>

...

Now it is pretty evident that Wolfe did not mean ground sloths, and probably
the 17 Megatherians are some line of human rulers, monsters, or humans who were
for some reason called 'great beasts'.

...

By the way, LU notes that there's a literal "megathere" in CotC, Ch. 22. Just for grins, one
possible connection with "the great beast Abaia" is that the megathere has a "deathlike
sleep"--there's Cthulhu again. Perhaps some will also find significance in the spelling with a final
"e" (contrary to my guess earlier), unlike the arctother, arsinother, baluchither, and uintather.
(What would I do without LU?)

Jerry Friedman

Jack Smith — 22 May 2011, 19:46 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Lexicon Urthus does mention the Soviet politburo in connection with the Group of 17, but Andre-Driussi doesn't cite his source.

On Sun, May 22, 2011 at 2:18 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> wrote:

On 5/22/2011 7:10 AM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:

I would like to slow down the growth of one more myth - what is the source of the idea that the number of the members of Politburo was 17? First of all, the "norm" changed several times. The first one, in 1917, had, as far as I remember, 7 members. Then the number varied - from 8 (in 1920-es) to 25 (in 1970-es). That is, in the USSR.

I first saw it in the original LEXICON URTHUS. I work with some former Soviet residence professors, I'll try to catch one and ask.

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Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com

Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana

< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jerry Friedman — 22 May 2011, 19:55 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>

...

I have my own theory.

I always assumed that the form of the title "Lives of the Megatherians" was a simple imitation of Butler's "Lives of the Saints." Based on this, one would think that the Beasts are the opposite of saints in a world even more fallen than our own: human beings who are evil rather than saintly, and who are in some sense "exalted" by their evil, thus deserving such treatment. But the saints are not numbered. And we don't know from this what evil the Beasts did except that it must have been great.

Upon googling, I found that another precedent is Suetonius' "Lives of the Twelve Caesars"---which I always knew as simply "The Twelve Caesars."

...

Wikipedia says the original title was De vita Caesarum, with no number.

I don't see anything to connect the Beasts with Ascia or Abaia except the number 17, and again I think the whole significance of "17" is that it is not "12." It is the thematic opposite of 12. 12 is the "complete" number because it is highly divisible. 17 is "very" prime, i.e., highly indivisible.

I think that may be part of it, though 17 is no more prime than 13 or 19.

[added later]

Q: Why are there 17 Megatherians and 17 Ascians in their ruling Group? Are they the same?

A: Why are there 12 Apostles and 12 Caesars? Are they the same?

I agree with you on some points, but here I have to say there is another connection that people have stressed: Severian calls Abaia a "great beast", "megatherians" means entities connected to the great beast(s) somehow, and Father Inire says the Ascians are the "slaves of Abaia". That makes it considerably more likely that the two 17s are connected. Also, this is fiction, not history. I don't think Wolfe anticipated what significance readers would find in every tiny detail, but this one seems to have a good chance of being purposeful.

Jerry Friedman

David Stockhoff — 22 May 2011, 22:28 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 5/22/2011 3:55 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: David Stockhoff<dstockhoff at verizon.net>

...

I have my own theory.

I always assumed that the form of the title "Lives of the Megatherians" was a simple imitation of Butler's "Lives of the Saints." Based on this, one would think that the Beasts are the opposite of saints in a world even more fallen than our own: human beings who are evil rather than saintly, and who are in some sense "exalted" by their evil, thus deserving such treatment. But the saints are not numbered. And we don't know from this what evil the Beasts did except that it must have been great.

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Even better.

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[added later]

Depends how you look at it. There are patterns among primes that I don't pretend to understand. But some primes may be rarer than others.

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not history. I don't think Wolfe anticipated what significance readers would find in every tiny detail, but this one seems to have a good chance of being purposeful.

I agree this is fiction, and that is my point. My theory is derived 100% from available books. Not history. Mine is a literary argument, not a historical one.

I think the connection you describe is speculation and must remain so.

Jason H — 22 May 2011, 23:40 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff<dstockhoff at verizon.net>

Depends how you look at it. There are patterns among primes that I don't pretend to understand. But some primes may be rarer than others.

If I might briefly offer a mathematician's perspective... :)

No single prime number is "rarer" than any others. (Although as numbers get larger, one encounters primes more and more rarely.)

I do think 17 has a significance over 13 and 19, but it's more psychological than mathematical: 17 is probably the most "generic"-seeming number under 20. Forget the even numbers. (They're too obvious and well-behaved.) 11 is one more than 10, and 19 is one less than 20; these are both "boundary" numbers. We have 13, 15 and 17 left. 13 is fraught with superstitious significance, of course, and 15 is a multiple of 5. That really leaves 17, the most "random" or "generic" number under 20. Does this sound like numerology? Yes, but I think it's really psychology.

Similarly, if you ask someone to pick a number from 1 to 10, they often pick 7.

The following blog entry is relevant and interesting:

http://scienceblogs.com/cognitivedaily/2007/02/is_17_the_most_random_number.php

-Jason

David Stockhoff — 23 May 2011, 00:04 · in reply to Jason H

Thanks Jason, that's helpful. Since Wolfe is no Lewis Carroll, although he is a fan, I think this is enough to explain why he might have settled on 17 as an "answer" to 12.

I won't rule out more obscure explanations, although I will note that wikipedia mentions about a dozen different classes of prime numbers to which 17 belongs. I don't care about such things myself.

On 5/22/2011 7:40 PM, Jason H wrote:

From: David Stockhoff<dstockhoff at verizon.net>
<mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>>

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-Jason

Adam Thornton — 23 May 2011, 00:35 · in reply to David Stockhoff

12 Caesars vs. 12 Apostles. Football match. And which football program has a Twelfth Man tradition? Wolfe's alma mater of course! We're onto something!

Sent from my Android phone with K-9 Mail. Please excuse my brevity.

David Stockhoff — 23 May 2011, 00:39 · in reply to Adam Thornton

Not to be confused with the Twelfth Imam, of course

Completely different!

On 5/22/2011 8:35 PM, Adam Thornton wrote:
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Sent from my Android phone with K-9 Mail. Please excuse my brevity.

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António Pedro Marques — 23 May 2011, 02:29 · in reply to David Stockhoff

No dia 22/05/2011, às 14:25, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> escreveu:

I think the whole significance of "17" is that it is not "12." It is the thematic opposite of 12. 12 is the "complete" number because it is highly divisible. 17 is "very" prime, i.e., highly indivisible

+1

António Pedro Marques — 23 May 2011, 02:40 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

No dia 22/05/2011, às 20:55, Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> escreveu:

I have to say there is another connection that people have stressed: Severian calls Abaia a "great beast", "megatherians" means entities connected to the great beast(s) somehow, and Father Inire says the Ascians are the "slaves of Abaia". That makes it considerably more likely that the two 17s are connected

The part where that argument doesn't work is where there is no evidence at all that the great beasts are 17, and in fact that looks like an impossibly large number for us to only hear about two.

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 02:54 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman:

Okay, is there an objection to the idea that the "megatherian" human rulers were early rulers of Ascia? We don't know why 17, but if there are 17 sea creatures, we don't know why that number either. (Other than the reference to the Politburo in either case, or the speculations in my previous post.)

It's true that the relation of the present "Group of 17" to these hypothetical 17 founders is vague, but so is the relation of the present "Group of 17" to the hypothetical 17 sea creatures.

Well, my objection is this.

It seems to me we agree that the term "megatherian" is **related** to the giant alien powers--because Abaia is called a "Great Beast". The only doubt is whether the term refers directly to the alien powers.

The "17 stones" and "the Group of 17" are enumerated by human choice. Someone decided they should be that number. That leaves only the "17 megatherians" possibly NOT being humanly enumerated. So unless the number 17 is derived from some source unnamed in the book, it seems most likely that the 17 Megatherians is the source of the other two.

True, it could be that 17 Megatherians and the Group of 17 are somehow equivalent (getting their name from an association with the alien powers). But that just adds a level of complication. You have to suppose why the group of 17 got that name, how the government of the Ascians led to a tradition in the Commonwealth, and any additional issues of speculation.

On the other hand, if one accepts that alien powers number 17 and are called Megatherians

because they are "like great beasts", then the selection of the number 17 elsewhere is self-explanatory.

It is marginally easier (given the reference to Abaia as a Great Beast) to decide the alien powers are the Megatherians.

Part of Urth? And what makes you say they're ruling?

Their various territories. They rule as the Storm King rules in 'An Evil Guest'. And Abaia has an army.

Okay, that's one.

Also, Erebus rules pirates (or they are devoted to his memory). Additionally, Cilinia was (presumably) executed for seeking to betray Typhon for Scylla. One presumes she did more than put posters up in her room. Scylla would have had to be a credible threat.

j

Jeff Wilson — 23 May 2011, 03:06 · in reply to Adam Thornton

On 5/22/2011 7:35 PM, Adam Thornton wrote:

12 Caesars vs. 12 Apostles. Football match. And which football program has a Twelfth Man tradition? Wolfe's alma mater of course! We're onto something!

I was thinking Canadian FB rules with 12 man teams; Mt Typhon is practically synonymous with Montreal, after all.

p.s. My last trip to the A&M campus was very disappointing in a way; even the 12th man statue was a recent addition (post-1980) despite the original event occurring in 1922; practically no notable sights on the campus from Wolfe's time remain.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 03:09 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

James:

Obviously, ambiguity is built into Wolfe's novels. There's no false positive test. I'm pretty comfortable that I'm right about this.

Maybe I should get serious about locating Fish.

Gerry Quinn:

Remus, obviously.

Why call Juno, Rhea Silvia, and Mars by direct cognates and call Romulus and Remus by Frog and Fish? There's no "Fish" in the "Jungle Book".

I think it is an easy call that Ymar is Frog (ymir=king=rana=frog). I suspect that Fish will be found on Tzadkiel (the shepherds). Possibly he will have a name that means "sword".

J.

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 03:14 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff:

I'll answer a question with a question:

Q: Why are there 17 Megatherians and 17 Ascians in their ruling Group?
Are they the same?

A: Why are there 12 Apostles and 12 Caesars? Are they the same?

The Gospels and Suetonius are history. Their numbers were not selected by an author unless it was God. There's the difference.

J.

David Duffy — 23 May 2011, 03:34 · in reply to James Wynn

On Sun, 22 May 2011, James Wynn wrote:

David Stockhoff:

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But one may speculate about choices by the Author, surely ;)

<http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVanswers/2006/10-01.htm>

Jerry Friedman — 23 May 2011, 04:43 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: Ant?nio Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com>

No dia 22/05/2011, ?s 20:55, Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> escreveu:

I have to say there is another connection that people have stressed: Severian calls Abaia a "great beast",

"megatherians" means entities connected to the great beast(s) somehow, and Father Inire says the Ascians are the "slaves of Abaia".

I keep saying that, but saying it doesn't make it true. He refers to the attacks from Ascias as "Abaia's incursions". Still, Abaia seems to rule Ascias, which is what's needed for the connection.

That makes it considerably more likely that the two 17s are connected

The part where that argument doesn't work is where there is no evidence at all that the great beasts are 17, and in fact that looks like an impossibly large number for us to only hear about two.

No, you're rebutting other people's argument. I'm the one saying the 17 megatherians might be the Group of 17.

By the way, LU says we know about four giant enemies of the New Sun, though Arioch and Scylla are mentioned only once each.

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>

On 5/22/2011 3:55 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

From: David Stockhoff<dstockhoff at verizon.net>

...

I have my own theory.

I always assumed that the form of the title "Lives of the Megatherians"

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Even better.

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[added later]

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I see you meant that some have rarer properties than others.

Also, this is fiction,

not history. I don't think Wolfe anticipated what significance readers

would

find in every tiny detail, but this one seems to have a good chance of

being

purposeful.

I agree this is fiction, and that is my point. My theory is derived 100%

from available books. Not history. Mine is a literary argument, not a

historical one.

I think the connection you describe is speculation and must remain so.

I agree. However, the speculative connection I described is entirely from the books. The one you described also involves history (Butler's /Lives of the Saints/, Suetonius' /On the Lives of the Caesars/--or is that what you meant by "available books"?).

Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman — 23 May 2011, 04:53 · in reply to Jason H

From: Jason H <beet31425 at gmail.com>

If I might briefly offer a mathematician's perspective... :)

...

I do think 17 has a significance over 13 and 19, but it's more psychological than mathematical: 17 is probably the most "generic"-seeming number under 20. Forget the even numbers. (They're too obvious and well-behaved.) 11 is one more than 10, and 19 is one less than 20; these are both "boundary" numbers. We have 13, 15 and 17 left. 13 is fraught with superstitious significance, of course, and 15 is a multiple of 5. That really leaves 17, the most "random" or "generic"

number under 20. Does this sound like numerology? Yes, but I think it's really psychology.

If you want to get a laugh with that, I think you have to tell it the way my professor did, ending with "19 is too close to 20". (Probably nobody laughed when I posted it here, but we did when he told it in class.) As psychology, though, it's more interesting than I realized.

Similarly, if you ask someone to pick a number from 1 to 10, they often pick 7.

The following blog entry is relevant and interesting:

http://scienceblogs.com/cognitivedaily/2007/02/is_17_the_most_random_number.php

And makes it more likely that Wolfe could have picked 17 "at random" more than once. Thanks for linking to that.

Jerry Friedman

António Pedro Marques — 23 May 2011, 10:37 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

No dia 23/05/2011, às 03:40, António Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com> escreveu:

No dia 22/05/2011, às 20:55, Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> escreveu:

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The part where that argument doesn't work is where there is no evidence at all that the great beasts are 17, and in fact that looks like an impossibly large number for us to only hear about two.

I misread you, you're not saying the great beasts are 17. So I'll advance the possibility that there were once 17 personalities, simultaneously or not, whom the ascians came to revere and the commonwealthians to despise. The ascians may call them the g17, or the group may have purposely named itself after the 17.

David Stockhoff — 23 May 2011, 11:48 · in reply to James Wynn

I disagree completely! The nice round number of Apostles was chosen by human "editors" and by tradition. The number 12 preceded the New Testament, much as significant parts of the

mythology of Christ preceded Christ by centuries, as Wolfe is well aware.

However, it hardly matters. Let's say that 12 has a real significance in our universe, so that God indeed chose 12 apostles, and Wolfe agrees.

Then I posit that 17 has a real significance in Severian's universe. That explains why it pops up 3 times in (to me) unrelated contexts. This is exactly what you'd expect if 17 was Severian's 12.

This is what you would expect if Urth was a gnostic parody of Earth.

On 5/22/2011 11:14 PM, James Wynn wrote:

David Stockhoff:

I'll answer a question with a question:

Q: Why are there 17 Megatherians and 17 Ascians in their ruling Group? Are they the same?

A: Why are there 12 Apostles and 12 Caesars? Are they the same?

The Gospels and Suetonius are history. Their numbers were not selected by an author unless it was God. There's the difference.

J.

David Stockhoff — 23 May 2011, 11:58 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 5/23/2011 12:43 AM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

Depends how you look at it. There are patterns among primes that I don't pretend to understand. But some primes may be rarer than others.

...

I see you meant that some have rarer properties than others.

Right---thanks for rephrasing me!

Also, this is fiction, not history. I don't think Wolfe anticipated what significance readers would find in every tiny detail, but this one seems to have a good chance of being purposeful.

I agree this is fiction, and that is my point. My theory is derived 100% from available books. Not history. Mine is a literary argument, not a historical one.

I think the connection you describe is speculation and must remain so.

I agree. However, the speculative connection I described is entirely from the books. The one you described also involves history (Butler's /Lives of the Saints/, Suetonius'/On the Lives of the Caesars/--or is that what you meant by "available books"?).

Yes, I meant those books. I am not sure if we are misunderstanding one another because you view those books as history and I do not. But consider that Suetonius _chose_ the number 12. There were, of course, more than 12 Roman emperors. Suetonius was writing history, but he was also telling stories.

And while I am not very familiar with Butler's book, I regard it as both more and less than purely factual. The stories of the saints are real, but they are unlikely to be all true.

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 15:13 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 5/23/2011 6:58 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

And while I am not very familiar with Butler's book, I regard it as both more and less than purely factual. The stories of the saints are real, but they are unlikely to be all true.

This is true of all history.

That, I think, is a lesson we are expected to learn from Wolfe's first person-narrative fiction.

J

Gerry Quinn — 23 May 2011, 15:35 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

Gerry Quinn:

James Wynn:

Obviously, ambiguity is built into Wolfe's novels. There's no false positive test. I'm pretty comfortable that I'm right about this. Maybe I should get serious about locating Fish.

Remus, obviously.

Why call Juno, Rhea Silvia, and Mars by direct cognates and call Romulus and Remus by Frog and Fish? There's no "Fish" in the "Jungle Book".

I'm not familiar with details of the Jungle Book - are their parts of it in the story?. In any case, we don't need it to identify Frog and Fish, because the story of Romulus and Remus is so very clearly identifiable that there seems no reasonable alternative source (other than a different retelling of the same story).

Look at the clear points of identity:

- * twins
- * half or quarter divine origin (more ambiguous than the others, see note 1 below)
- * mother's name: Bird of the Woods = Rhea Silvia
- * abandoned in a basket
- * raised by wolves and shepherds (slight modification, see note 2)
- * raised a motley army and demanded their heritage from their usurping great uncle
- * decided to found a new city
- * stole women from neighbouring tribes
- * Frog builds a trench and tells Fish it is to be the wall; Fish mocks him by jumping over it; Frog slays him (*exactly* the same as with Romulus and Remus).

Note 1: Mars or Hercules was supposedly their father - some people have found Mars somewhere I think, but I prefer the idea of Hercules as Spring Wind, because of his parentage, Zeus appearing as a flower which is the sort of thing he did. Frog later claimed his heritage in the name of the Red Flower.)

Note 2: Instead of having both twins raised first by wolves and later by shepherds, Wolfe splits them so one is raised by each.

I honestly don't understand how anyone can seriously assert that this story is anything other

than a version of Romulus and Remus! And on such flimsy evidence...

I think it is an easy call that Ymar is Frog (ymir=king=rana=frog). I suspect that Fish will be found on Tzadkiel (the shepherds). Possibly he will have a name that means "sword".

That's just a chain of puns in a bunch of different languages. I think it's random noise that means nothing. How come Frog isn't Martin Luther King - the chain is one step shorter! We don't know a lot about the life of Ymar the Autarch - are there any obvious correspondences between his story and that of Frog? I can't think of any, unless Ymar founded Nessus, which seems it would be hard to justify.

If we were completely at sea regarding who Frog is, there might be some point in chasing such thin threads... but we're not! It's perfectly clear from the points listed above that Frog is Romulus. Wolfe isn't even trying to hide it. If Wolfe has worked in clues to the deep history of early Autarchy, they are very subtle and they cannot involve identifying Ymar with Frog (there could in principle be oblique references to events somewhere in the story, maybe in the space travel or war parts).

Why did he change the names of Frog and Fish, but translate Rhea Silvia with a pun? Why not? The legends change and mutate over time; some bits fall off and some mutate. Maybe there's a bit of Jungle Book mixed in, a lot of the chatter among the wolves comes from somewhere other than the story of Romulus and Remus, and it might have come from there, or another story or stories, or completely from Wolfe's imagination.

- Gerry Quinn

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 23 May 2011, 16:19 · in reply to James Wynn

Exactly.

--- On Mon, 5/23/11, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) do the Hierogrammates *care* about the megatherians?
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Date: Monday, May 23, 2011, 11:13 AM
On 5/23/2011 6:58 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

And while I am not very familiar with Butler's book, I regard it as both more and less than purely factual. The stories of the saints are real, but they are unlikely to be all true.

This is true of all history.
That, I think, is a lesson we are expected to learn from Wolfe's first person-narrative fiction.

J

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 23 May 2011, 16:47 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

But we discuss also the method of Wolfe! And if you look at the stories in the

Book of the New Sun, there is often (or always?) an old story "updated" (or modified) by the passage of time! And it shows so beautifully the depth of time behind - why always try to find unique source? In the story of Student and his Son something even was lost - the explanation

why the black sail provokes the suicide of the Student. Jonas knew the original story (with Athens, Minotaur etc.). In the story of Fish and Frog the dialogues of Wolves are taken from Jungle's book, while the story itself is essentially the story of Romulus and Remus. Why to try to equate as much as possible, when the diversity is part of the method?

Best

Sergei

Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

Gerry Quinn:

James Wynn:

Obviously, ambiguity is built into Wolfe's novels. There's no false positive test. I'm pretty comfortable that I'm right about this. Maybe I should get serious about locating Fish.

Remus, obviously.

Why call Juno, Rhea Silvia, and Mars by direct cognates and call Romulus and Remus by Frog and Fish? There's no "Fish" in the "Jungle Book".

I'm not familiar with details of the Jungle Book - are their parts of it in the story?. In any case, we don't need it to identify Frog and Fish, because the story of Romulus and Remus is so very clearly identifiable that there seems no reasonable alternative source (other than a different retelling of the same story).

Look at the clear points of identity:

- * twins
- * half or quarter divine origin (more ambiguous than the others, see note 1 below)
- * mother's name: Bird of the Woods = Rhea Silvia
- * abandoned in a basket
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Note 1: Mars or Hercules was supposedly their father - some people have found Mars somewhere I think, but I prefer the idea of Hercules as Spring Wind, because of his parentage, Zeus appearing as a flower which is the sort of thing he did. Frog later claimed his heritage in the name of the Red Flower.)

Note 2: Instead of having both twins raised first by wolves and later by shepherds, Wolfe splits them so one is raised by each.

I honestly don't understand how anyone can seriously assert that this story is anything other than a version of Romulus and Remus! And on such flimsy evidence...

I think it is an easy call that Ymar is Frog (ymir=king=rana=frog). I suspect that Fish will be found on Tzadkiel (the shepherds). Possibly he will have a name that means "sword".

That's just a chain of puns in a bunch of different languages. I think it's random noise that means nothing. How come Frog isn't Martin Luther King - the chain is one step shorter! We don't know a lot about the life of Ymar the Autarch - are there any obvious correspondences between his story and that of Frog? I can't think of any, unless Ymar founded Nessus, which seems it would be hard to justify.

If we were completely at sea regarding who Frog is, there might be some point in chasing such thin threads... but we're not! It's perfectly clear from the points listed above that Frog is Romulus. Wolfe isn't even trying to hide it. If Wolfe has worked in clues to the deep history of early Autarchy, they are very subtle and they cannot involve identifying Ymar with Frog (there could in principle be oblique references to events somewhere in the story, maybe in the space travel or war parts).

Why did he change the names of Frog and Fish, but translate Rhea Silvia with a pun? Why not? The legends change and mutate over time; some bits fall off and some mutate. Maybe there's a bit of Jungle Book mixed in, a lot of the chatter among the wolves comes from somewhere other than the story of Romulus and Remus, and it might have come from there, or another story or stories, or completely from Wolfe's imagination.

- Gerry Quinn

Lee Berman — 23 May 2011, 17:43 · follows Sergei SOLOVIEV

Gerry Quinn: I'm not familiar with details of the Jungle Book - are their parts of it in the story?....I honestly don't understand how anyone can seriously assert that this story is anything other than a version of Romulus and Remus!

There are. In The Jungle Book, a human baby is adopted and raised by wolves. He is called Mowgli, meaning Frog (in wolf speech) due to his lack of fur. There is a council of wolves, a wise and sober black panther, an evil, rapacious tiger, a garrulous bear and fire referred to as "the red flower". All these elements are also found in the Tale of the Boy Called Frog.

Nobody is asserting the story isn't a version of Romulus and Remus. But it is clearly more than just that. Frog is Romulus and Mowgli and a bit of Moses and Cadmus (and perhaps others?) to boot. The American Pilgrims are referenced also.

For me each one of those allusions connects to the issues of exploration and colonization and conquest which were introduced in 5HoC. It helps illuminate the backstory of the history of Urth and human exploration in space and previous empires, etc. urth illustrates that we can expect human behavior in the future of spaceship exploration of the galaxy to duplicate our behavior during the past sailing

ship exploration of the world's oceans.

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 18:12 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

J Wynn:

Why call Juno, Rhea Silvia, and Mars by direct cognates and call Romulus and Remus by Frog and Fish? There's no "Fish" in the "Jungle Book".

Gerry:

I'm not familiar with details of the Jungle Book - are their parts of it in the story?. In any case, we don't need it to identify Frog and Fish, because the story of Romulus and Remus is so very clearly identifiable that there seems no reasonable alternative source (other than a different retelling of the same story).

Look at the clear points of identity:

- * twins

[points of connection between Romulus and Frog]

- * Frog builds a trench and tells Fish it is to be the wall; Fish mocks him by jumping over it; Frog slays him (*exactly* the same as with Romulus and Remus).

Note 1: Mars or Hercules was supposedly their father - some people have found Mars somewhere I think, but I prefer the idea of Hercules as Spring Wind, because of his parentage, Zeus appearing as a flower which is the sort of thing he did.

Spring Wind is Hercules? You justify this with supposed comparisons to *Zeus* rather than Hercules? And you have a problem with flimsy evidence?

My evidence is based on the clear patterns of the way Wolfe starts telling this story. Juno being called "Early Summer" is straight forward--it is just that the translator mixes up what comes from where. He assumes Juno's name comes from June rather than the other way around. Rhea Silvia is again a straightforward attempt at translation. The "spring" in Spring Wind works for "Mars" but does not fit the pattern already laid down because there's no place for the "Wind" translation. The telling of this story has just taken a very strange turn, and it is about to get worse.

Of course, there is nothing in Romulus' or Remus' name or story to suggest calling them "Frog" and "Fish". You are arbitrarily stating that it's random noise because it doesn't fit your preconceived model. That must be very comforting. You don't even need to feel like you know "The Jungle Book" all that well to defend your analysis. My interpretations don't leave me that convenient escape hatch whenever I'm cornered. I started with the assumption that Frog was a real person. Unlike you, I don't just settle on the first hill that catches my eye and build fortifications there. I first profiled the name of the person who could be Frog and then found Ymar sitting in plain sight. Based on same pattern, I believe that there is a good chance Severian will have met Fish on Tzadkiel (the shepherds) and his name will have a synonym or etymology that could be translated fish or a type of fish. Possibly his name will mean "sword" or a type of sword. Naturally, if I find someone that matches what I was looking for, I will be doubly-convinced, because he fits a profile I created beforehand.

Of course the Story of Frog has a lot of similarities to the Life of Romulus. "East of Eden" has a lot of similarities to Genesis. So what? This is the sort of conversation I have with people who say Jesus of Nazareth is actually Dionysus or Mithras. And I think that sort of exegesis was on

Wolfe's mind while writing this story.

Frog later claimed his heritage in the name of the Red Flower.)

Red Flower is a reference from "The Jungle Books". In the Kipling's stories it means "fire". In the Book of the New Sun, an easy interpretation would be the sun itself. However, I'd be open to other reasonable explanations.

Note 2: Instead of having both twins raised first by wolves and later by shepherds, Wolfe splits them so one is raised by each. I honestly don't understand how anyone can seriously assert that this story is anything other than a version of Romulus and Remus! And on such flimsy evidence...

That's because you don't really know that much about the references. If you were better able to recognize them, they would be quite jarring. The fact that it has so many similarities to the story of Romulus and Remus only makes the parts that don't map so troubling.

I think it is an easy call that Ymar is Frog (ymir=king=rana=frog). I suspect that Fish will be found on Tzadkiel (the shepherds). Possibly he will have a name that means "sword".

That's just a chain of puns in a bunch of different languages. I think it's random noise that means nothing. How come Frog isn't Martin Luther King - the chain is one step shorter!

You're doing it again, Gerry. I was inclined to ignore this response as unserious even at face-value. However (speaking as to a child), because MLK is not a character in the books. Ymar is. He is a child in the time of Typhon's reign.

We don't know a lot about the life of Ymar the Autarch - are there any obvious correspondences between his story and that of Frog?

Raised by wolves (Torturers).

I can't think of any, unless Ymar founded Nessus, which seems it would be hard to justify.

Why? Because you think this is merely Wolfe ham-fisting the story of Romulus for no narrative value, you think Ymar must be precisely like Romulus in every way? I'm getting dizzy.

J.

Gerry Quinn — 23 May 2011, 18:21 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>
Gerry Quinn:

I'm not familiar with details of the Jungle Book - are their parts of it in the story?....I honestly don't understand how anyone can seriously assert that this story is anything other than a version of Romulus and Remus!

The ellipses you place there disguise a jump of twenty or thirty lines, and a slight change of context. I am **not** disputing (as you try to insinuate) the fact that parts of the story come from other sources. What I actually said was:

I'm not familiar with details of the Jungle Book - are their parts of it in the story?. In any case, we don't need it to identify Frog and Fish, because the story of Romulus and Remus is so very clearly identifiable that there seems no reasonable alternative source (other than a different

retelling of the same story).

In other words, Romulus and Remus are the source for *Frog* and *Fish*, even if Jungle Book is the source for various tigers, woodcutters, bears etc. in parts of the story concerning other characters. In particular, Ymar the Autarch is surplus to requirements.

There are. In The Jungle Book, a human baby is adopted and raised by wolves. He is called Mowgli, meaning Frog (in wolf speech) due to his lack of fur. There is a council of wolves, a wise and sober black panther, an evil, rapacious tiger, a garrulous bear and fire referred to as "the red flower". All these elements are also found in the Tale of the Boy Called Frog.

Nobody is asserting the story isn't a version of Romulus and Remus. But it is clearly more than just that. Frog is Romulus and Mowgli and a bit of Moses and Cadmus (and perhaps others?) to boot. The American Pilgrims are referenced also.

For me each one of those allusions connects to the issues of exploration and colonization and conquest which were introduced in 5HoC. It helps illuminate the backstory of the history of Urth and human exploration in space and previous empires, etc. urth illustrates that we can expect human behavior in the future of spaceship exploration of the galaxy to duplicate our behavior during the past sailing ship exploration of the world's oceans.

History in general, I would say, involving war, colonisation, and other matters. Yes, Wolfe is indicating that human nature has remained much the same, so that our most ancient stories, updated with futuristic trappings, will seem no less psychologically realistic to our distant descendants; or the distant descendants of our counterparts in Urth's cycle, anyway.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 23 May 2011, 19:42 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

Gerry:

Note 1: Mars or Hercules was supposedly their father - some people have found Mars somewhere I think, but I prefer the idea of Hercules as Spring Wind, because of his parentage, Zeus appearing as a flower which is the sort of thing he did.

Spring Wind is Hercules? You justify this with supposed comparisons to *Zeus* rather than Hercules? And you have a problem with flimsy evidence?

When I looked up the story, Mars and Hercules were given (perhaps incorrectly) as the two main alternatives for the father of the twins, and Hercules appealed to me because Spring Wind seemed semi rather than wholly divine. It was Spring Wind's *father* who appeared as a flower - in Hercules' case that would be Zeus. Since then, Andrew has convinced me that clearly it is Mars who is Spring Wind, as Mars was conceived by Juno with the aid of a magic flower, and on further study I see he is a god of agriculture as well as war, which again fits Spring Wind, so I have abandoned the Hercules hypothesis. I don't think it was all that flimsy though. And (I will just note) the main character of the story is Frog/Romulus. He and his immediate story and twin

brother are more central than the details of his ancestors.

My evidence is based on the clear patterns of the way Wolfe starts telling this story. Juno being called "Early Summer" is straight forward--it is just that the translator mixes up what comes from where. He assumes Juno's name comes from June rather than the other way around. Rhea Silvia is again a straightforward attempt at translation.

If puns count as translation! But yes, Rhea Silvia is clear as daylight, and Juno is perfectly plausible.

The "spring" in Spring Wind works for "Mars" but does not fit the pattern already laid down because there's no place for the "Wind" translation. The telling of this story has just taken a very strange turn, and it is about to get worse.

<Shrug> I see nothing terribly strange about it. Characters' names in mythological stories change all the time. Wolfe might simply have felt that just 'Spring' was too short a name, and settled on 'Spring Wind'.

Of course, there is nothing in Romulus' or Remus' name or story to suggest calling them "Frog" and "Fish". You are arbitrarily stating that it's random noise because it doesn't fit your preconceived model.

What would *you* suggest calling them? There is no obvious translation as with Juno or in particular Rhea Silvia. Any name that sounds like Rome is way too obvious to be usable. Wolfe is already planning to bring in lots of talking animals, so why not name the boys after animals? [He liked that idea so much he used it again!] Keeping the alliteration of Romulus and Remus, of course.

I started with the assumption that Frog was a real person. Unlike you, I don't just settle on the first hill that catches my eye and build fortifications there.

Romulus isn't "the first hill that catches my eye". Romulus is the clear and undisputable identity of Frog. Their stories and circumstances match perfectly aside from the change of name (which doesn't apply to his mother). If you are looking for a real person, you are looking for a real person who for some reason is doomed to repeat the exact destiny of Romulus.

I first profiled the name of the person who could be Frog and then found Ymar sitting in plain sight. Based on same pattern, I believe that there is a good chance Severian will have met Fish on Tzadkiel (the shepherds) and his name will have a synonym or etymology that could be translated fish or a type of fish. Possibly his name will mean "sword" or a type of sword. Naturally, if I find someone that matches what I was looking for, I will be doubly-convinced, because he fits a profile I created beforehand.

It's not a "profile": it's just the assertion that Frog, for no obvious reason, must be somebody who is mentioned in BotNS, and that person can be linked by a chain of puns in various languages to the word Frog. It ignores the fact that we already have a clear and obvious ID for Frog, and it ignores any relationship of the story of that person to the story of Romulus.

Of course the Story of Frog has a lot of similarities to the Life of Romulus. "East of Eden" has a lot of similarities to Genesis. So what?

It doesn't have "a lot of similarities". It is as near identical as Wolfe could make it given the purposes for which he was writing. It has so many points of identity that there are no reasonable doubts for disputing it. His mother is identified clearly by name! He was abandoned with his twin to float downriver in a basket, and raised by wolves! He slew his twin when he jumped over the trench marking the wall of the city they had founded! In the entire history of past and future history and mythology, this is more than enough to identify one particular person.

Frog later claimed his heritage in the name of the Red Flower.)

Red Flower is a reference from "The Jungle Books". In the Kipling's stories it means "fire". In the Book of the New Sun, an easy interpretation would be the sun itself. However, I'd be open to other reasonable explanations.

That's from my Hercules theory, when I thought the flower was Zeus. It seems likely that the Red Flower is actually a mix of Juno's flower with the Jungle book.

Note 2: Instead of having both twins raised first by wolves and later by shepherds, Wolfe splits them so one is raised by each.

I honestly don't understand how anyone can seriously assert that this story is anything other than a version of Romulus and Remus! And on such flimsy evidence...

That's because you don't really know that much about the references. If you were better able to recognize them, they would be quite jarring. The fact that it has so many similarities to the story of Romulus and Remus only makes the parts that don't map so troubling.

Every part maps except two or three names (and in my mind they actually map well enough considering Wolfe's purposes).

I think it is an easy call that Ymar is Frog (ymir=king=rana=frog). I suspect that Fish will be found on Tzadkiel (the shepherds). Possibly he will have a name that means "sword".

That's just a chain of puns in a bunch of different languages. I think it's random noise that means nothing. How come Frog isn't Martin Luther King - the chain is one step shorter!

You're doing it again, Gerry. I was inclined to ignore this response as unserious even at face-value. However (speaking as to a child), because MLK is not a character in the books. Ymar is. He is a child in the time of Typhon's reign.

Romulus isn't a character in the books either. If Romulus could be in a story, Martin Luther King could also. As could Neil Armstrong.

But anyway, you indicated that you're looking for "a real person", i.e. someone from the historical past of Severian's time. I could buy Wolfe putting something about such a person into such a story, certainly, adding or modifying incidents to show something of such a person's history. The question is, does such a person exist? The obvious answer to me is no, the Romulus identity is obvious and there are no difficult questions raised about it.

We don't know a lot about the life of Ymar the Autarch - are there any obvious correspondences between his story and that of Frog?

Raised by wolves (Torturers).

Bit of a stretch. Anything better? More importantly, if Wolfe had put a reference to Ymar or Typhon into the story of Frog, it would have been to tell us something about them. What, exactly, do you think we are being told?

I can't think of any, unless Ymar founded Nessus, which seems it would be hard to justify.

Why? Because you think this is _merely_ Wolfe ham-fisting the story of Romulus for no narrative value, you think Ymar must be precisely like Romulus in every way? I'm getting dizzy.

I'm asking - if Wolfe is for some reason telling us the story of Romulus, but hinting (in a manner too subtle for me) that it is really the story of Ymar, what is the point he is making? So far I can't

see that you have proposed any.

- Gerry Quinn

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 21:36 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn:

[...] And (I will just note) the main character of the story is Frog/Romulus. He and his immediate story and twin brother are more central than the details of his ancestors.

Why do you not say that this is the story of Mowgli with a few details of Romulus thrown in? The name "Mowgli" actually _means_ 'frog', and there are at least as many parallels as with Romulus. There's no Red Flower in Romulus' story. What could be more straightforward? Of course, there's no Naked One in either story. It only maps to The Jungle Book because bear=bare (ha ha ha) but then we know that "puns are not translation" so let's ignore that. And the Red Flower was never Mowgli's banner. There are lots details that sort of parallel one story or both, but are actually unique. This is a perfect example of confirmation bias. You see what you think your supposed to see and you filter out all the rest.

My evidence is based on the clear patterns of the way Wolfe starts telling this story. Juno being called "Early Summer" is straight forward--it is just that the translator mixes up what comes from where. He assumes Juno's name comes from June rather than the other way around. Rhea Silvia is again a straightforward attempt attempt at translation.

If puns count as translation! But yes, Rhea Silvia is clear as daylight, and Juno is perfectly plausible.

If historian of the future, were to tell the story of WW2 and called Germany "the Tribes" in his own language, that would not be a pun. That is a valid translation for Germany. And if that history traveled in Time back to us, and we read that the Tribes had invaded Paris, it would sound strange, but it is not a pun.

Of course, there is nothing in Romulus' or Remus' name or story to suggest calling them "Frog" and "Fish". You are arbitrarily stating that it's random noise because it doesn't fit your preconceived model.

What would *you* suggest calling them? There is no obvious translation as with Juno or in particular Rhea Silvia. Any name that sounds like Rome is way too obvious to be usable.

Since when does Wolfe require obvious translations? I suppose a name associated with "teat" which is a common etymology of the word "Rome". Suddenly, Wolfe _doesn't_ want to be obvious?

[...]Romulus isn't a character in the books either. If Romulus could be in a story, Martin Luther King could also.
As could Neil Armstrong.

It's not Romulus anymore than it is Mowgli. You making the same mistake as the mythologers Wolfe is parodying.

[...] More importantly, if Wolfe had put a reference to Ymar or Typhon into the story of Frog, it would have been to tell us something about them. What, exactly, do you think we are being told?

Ymar's parentage and a glimpse at the vast history Wolfe has imagined.
What is the purpose of mentioning the Nargothrond or Moria in "The Hobbit"?

I'm asking - if Wolfe is for some reason telling us the story of Romulus, but hinting (in a manner too subtle for me)...

yep. It went right over your head.

It's not the story of Romulus. Nor is it the story of Mowgli. That is the mistake the mythographers made. And you are making it write along with them. I'm appreciating Wolfe's joke more and more.

J.

pinlighter — 23 May 2011, 21:40 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

----- Original Message ----- >> Of course, there is nothing in Romulus' or Remus' name or story to suggest

calling them "Frog" and "Fish". You are arbitrarily stating that it's

It's not a "profile": it's just the assertion that Frog, for no obvious reason, must be somebody who is mentioned in BotNS, and that person can be linked by a chain of puns in various languages to the word Frog.

<delurk>

Um, has it been mentioned that " Mowgli" is supposed to mean "frog"?

</delurk>

- hartshorn

António Pedro Marques — 23 May 2011, 21:41 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

Why do you not say that this is the story of Mowgli with a few details of Romulus thrown in? The name "Mowgli" actually _means_ 'frog', and there are at least as many parallels as with Romulus.

So tell us about them. Erase the names and colours, and enumerate the similarities that are left. How Frog's deeds parallel those of Mowgli.

António Pedro Marques — 23 May 2011, 21:51 · in reply to pinlighter

pinlighter wrote:

Um, has it been mentioned that " Mowgli" is supposed to mean "frog"?

Nobody denied that there are elements of the Book of the Jungle in the story; the question is whether they're anything more than scenic.

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 22:05 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

James Wynn wrote:

Why do you not say that this is the story of Mowgli with a few details of Romulus thrown in? The name "Mowgli" actually _means_ 'frog', and there are at least as many parallels as with Romulus.

Ant?nio Pedro Marques:

So tell us about them. Erase the names and colours, and enumerate the similarities that are left. How Frog's deeds parallel those of Mowgli.

Erase the names and colors?

Shall I also leave out the names of Juno, Rhea Silvia, and Mars? And all the "color" that is similar

to the life of Romulus? Get real.

Expanding on Andrew's list:

The name 'Frog'

Found by animals in the forest

Adopted by wolves (Romulus was sucked by A SINGLE wolf)

An argument among the wolves regarding his adoption, in which the tiger takes part

The tiger (smilodon) as the threat to the child.

The black panther (Black Killer-- the word 'panther' is Greek for "all beasts of prey") The Naked One (the Bare/bear) who plays the same role as Baloo The Red Flower A woodcutter is one of Frog's fathers

J.

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 22:06 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

pinlighter wrote:

Um, has it been mentioned that "Mowgli" is supposed to mean "frog"?

Nobody denied that there are elements of the Book of the Jungle in the story; the question is whether they're anything more than scenic.

Confirmation bias.

It doesn't fit with what I expected, therefore it is invisible.

J.

António Pedro Marques — 23 May 2011, 22:14 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

pinlighter wrote:

Um, has it been mentioned that "Mowgli" is supposed to mean "frog"?

Nobody denied that there are elements of the Book of the Jungle in the story; the question is whether they're anything more than scenic.

Confirmation bias.

It doesn't fit with what I expected, therefore it is invisible.

What is invisible? The near 1:1 correspondence with Romulus's story to you, because you don't want it to be the single most important part of it, because it wasn't what you expected, so you have to downplay it as just a minor component?

António Pedro Marques — 23 May 2011, 22:17 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

James Wynn wrote:

Why do you not say that this is the story of Mowgli with a few details of Romulus thrown in? The name "Mowgli" actually _means_ 'frog', and there are at least as many parallels as with Romulus.

António Pedro Marques: So tell us about them. Erase the names and colours, and enumerate the similarities that are left. How Frog's deeds parallel those of Mowgli.

Erase the names and colors?

Yes.

Shall I also leave out the names of Juno, Rhea Silvia, and Mars?

Yes.

And all the "color" that is similar to the life of Romulus?

What would that be?

Get real.

Give us some Stuff That Happens.

James Wynn — 23 May 2011, 22:23 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

António Pedro Marques: So tell us about them. Erase the names and colours, and enumerate the similarities that are left. How Frog's deeds parallel those of Mowgli.

Erase the names and colors?

Yes.

Shall I also leave out the names of Juno, Rhea Silvia, and Mars?

Yes.

And all the "color" that is similar to the life of Romulus?

What would that be?

Get real.

Give us some Stuff That Happens.

?????

Are you winding me up, Antonio?

Almost all of Part II and all of Part III are lifted out of The Jungle Book and has zero relation to the life Romulus. Part IV has parallels to the life of Romulus, but it is it's own story. If this is a joke, now is the time to say something.

J.

António Pedro Marques — 23 May 2011, 22:44 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

Give us some Stuff That Happens.

?????

Are you winding me up, Antonio?

No. You usually don't need any help in that regard. I wish you'd stop reacting that way, but that's who you are, and it doesn't get so much in the way once one gets the hang of it.

Almost all of Part II and all of Part III are lifted out of The Jungle Book and has zero relation to the life Romulus.

Part IV has parallels to the life of Romulus, but it is it's own story.

If this is a joke, now is the time to say something.

I don't know what you want me, or anyone else, to say. I think it's clear for most of us that like others the F&F story was cobbled up from various stories we know, and maybe one or other we don't. You even eloquently laid out a possible account of its composition. What I don't think is correct is to insist, after all that, that there is one obvious identification there for all to see, much less that that is to Ymar. It may be defensible, but I don't find it cogent or enabling

enough for it to be proclaimed as evident. I've mentioned before theories may stand on their plausibility, on their evidential support, and on their ability to enrich the story (and enrich means not with themselves, but with something more). Where one of those aspects is missing, one other may suffice - and that's why I think Gerry asked you what does Frog ~ Ymar bring into the book, and 'it brings Frog ~ Ymar' isn't very satisfying. (You'll now ask what does Nulukkizdin bring into the Hobbit, or Grandma Dorcas into the New Sun, but those aren't theories, they're data; and I'm afraid this brings us into one of our first exchanges here, which I don't think would be especially nice to revisit.)

So no, I'm not winding you up, I'm asking you to wind down.

Gerry Quinn — 24 May 2011, 00:38 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

Gerry Quinn:

[...] And (I will just note) the main character of the story is

Frog/Romulus. He and his immediate story and twin brother are more central than the details of his ancestors.

Why do you not say that this is the story of Mowgli with a few details of Romulus thrown in?

Because the story of the actual doings of Frog is the story of Romulus. (The story of his ancestry is also that of Romulus.) The section involving the Senate of Wolves is from the Jungle Book, but Frog is only a passive spectator there.

The name "Mowgli" actually _means_ 'frog', and

Yes, it seems he gets his name from the Jungle Book. Which means, in turn, that there is no need for any strained connection to Ymar! I maintain, however, that the names Romulus and Remus retain an echo in the equally alliterative Frog and Fish. Wolfe mixes the two stories.

[By the way, I don't see the name Spring Wind as a problem. In the first place, Mars is associated with Spring. It is suggested in the story that Early Summer had a particular reason for calling him Spring Wind, but that reason is not stated. However, what *is* stated is that Early Summer took a secret delight in his affinity for agriculture. There was a Greek god of Spring winds called Zephyr who brought the rains of early spring which were necessary for seeds to sprout; it may be that Early Summer was thinking of these winds and rains.]

there are at least as many parallels as with Romulus. There's no Red Flower in Romulus' story.

But there is! Juno was impregnated by a magic flower, and this is repeated in Wolfe's version. Wolfe states that the flower was "redder than any rose". So while the association of the red flower with fire comes from the Jungle Book, Wolfe has again mixed the two stories together. In the Jungle Book, Mowgli's grandmother was not impregnated by fire.

Traditionally the magic flower appears to be the foxglove, which comes in a variety of colours, including red.

What could be more straightforward? Of course, there's no Naked One in either story. It only maps to The Jungle Book because bear=bare (ha ha ha) but then we know that "puns are not translation" so let's ignore that. And the Red Flower was never Mowgli's banner. There are lots of details that sort of parallel one story or both, but are actually unique. This is a perfect example of confirmation bias. You see what you think your supposed to see and you filter out all the rest.

The fact is that the points of coincidence between Frog's life story and that of Romulus are pretty much exact. I listed them. There's no "sort of parallel detail" involved - there is a reproduction that is essentially exact to the limits within which Wolfe was working - for example Rhea Silvia's name, or the death of Remus.

The connections to the Jungle Book may be pretty solid too; the only thing is that those parts are not really much about Frog.

Of course, there is nothing in Romulus' or Remus' name or story to suggest calling them "Frog" and "Fish". You are arbitrarily stating that it's random noise because it doesn't fit your preconceived model.

What would *you* suggest calling them? There is no obvious translation as with Juno or in particular Rhea Silvia. Any name that sounds like Rome is way too obvious to be usable.

Since when does Wolfe require obvious translations? I suppose a name associated with "teat" which is a common etymology of the word "Rome". Suddenly, Wolfe _doesn't_ want to be obvious?

He's not hiding the origins of the story; that doesn't mean he wants to crudely replicate it. You may be right about the etymology of Romulus, but it doesn't seem well-known - I googled and the only suggestion I saw was Wikipedia's suggestion that it may simply be a back-formation from Rome. Then there is the problem of what to name Remus. So, Kipling came to the rescue! And the alliteration of Romulus and Remus is preserved in the names of Frog and Fish.

[...]Romulus isn't a character in the books either. If Romulus could be in a story, Martin Luther King could also.
As could Neil Armstrong.

It's not Romulus anymore than it is Mowgli. You making the same mistake as the mythologers Wolfe is parodying.

It *is* Romulus and in parts Mowgli. The stories told are the stories of what Romulus did, and to a lesser extent what Mowgli's animal friends did.

[...] More importantly, if Wolfe had put a reference to Ymar or Typhon into the story of Frog, it would have been to tell us something about them. What, exactly, do you think we are being told?

Ymar's parentage and a glimpse at the vast history Wolfe has imagined.

I could buy a reference to Typhon in Spring Wind - but what exactly are you proposing with regard to Ymar's parentage? Wolfe in a later book places Ymar as a young apprentice of the Torturer's of Typhon's time [an error on Wolfe's part, IMO, as I think Ymar should have been later - but that's just my literary opinion]. Clearly in UotNS Ymar's parentage is unknown - but for it to be mythologised it would have to have later become widely known that Ymar was the son of Typhon. But there's no supporting evidence for that. And if the mythologisers made that mistake, why did the fact become widely known enough for them to do so, and then become forgotten again?

And Ymar clearly didn't found Nessus. It's hard to see how he could have had a twin brother. If the mythologisers are making a mistake, WHY do you think they are making such a mistake? Why do they conflate the stories of Romulus and Ymar?

I'm asking - if Wolfe is for some reason telling us the story of Romulus, but hinting (in a manner too subtle for me)...

yep. It went right over your head.

It's not the story of Romulus. Nor is it the story of Mowgli. That is the mistake the mythographers made. And you are making it write along with them. I'm appreciating Wolfe's joke more and more.

So what's the Great Secret of Ymar then? [Though we've now established that the name Frog comes from the Jungle Book, so you really have no justification at all for your Ymar = emir = rana = frog argument! The name Frog has been explained, and the explanation has nothing to do with Ymar.]

- Gerry Quinn

Lee Berman — 24 May 2011, 13:22 · follows Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn: And Ymar clearly didn't found Nessus. It's hard to see how he could have had a twin brother. If the mythologisers are making a mistake, WHY do you think they are making such a mistake? Why do they conflate the stories of Romulus and Ymar?

On first reading James' hypothesis that Frog=Ymar it had the immediate ring of truth for me, sort of along the lines of his Typhon-Alexander connection. The Typhon-Spring Wind (add Windcloud?) connection took longer to gain acceptance but I notice even Gerry is accepting that as a possibility now.

The truthiness of the connection was subconscious at first but think I understand it now. The Tale of the Boy Called Frog is a story told, by request, to a boy named Little Severian. In UotNS, when Severiaan meets the boy named Reechy he comes to learn that he is Ymar and thus, essentially, a "little Severian" i.e. a torturer boy who rises to become Autarch. I find this connection more compelling and thus the frog-rana-king connection to be secondary and supporting.

Ymar is the ruler who succeeds Typhon while Frog is the son who succeeds Spring Wind as the hero of the story. No, Ymar didn't found Nessus but he did (I assert) with help from a certain mysterious, magical vizier, found the Commonwealth. A passable parallel to Romulus, imho. Moses was also a founder, though not of a city. We don't know Mowgli's future but I get an intuitive presentiment of greatness from Kipling's writing.

Is Gerry's disbelief in Ymar's twin brother because he would expect that brother to be there as a Torturer's Apprentice? Since we have now established that the Tale of Frog is not a straight rendition of Romulus and Remus can we speculate that perhaps Ymar had a twin sister? Is there a 1000 year old witch in BotNS? (in UotNS I think we also find a magical vizier in Typhon's time).

Unfortunately I cannot get to the text right now. Am I right in remembering the sowing of teeth or stones to grow soldiers in Tale of Boy Called Frog? If so the story also invokes Cadmus, the founder of Thebes and that royal house. As brother to Europa and grandfather to Dionysus, the mythological inclusion of Cadmus might be fruitful in fleshing out more of the Sun Series backstory.

Gerry Quinn — 24 May 2011, 14:29 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>
Gerry Quinn:

And Ymar clearly didn't found Nessus. It's hard to see how he could have had a twin brother. If the mythologisers are making a mistake, WHY do you think they are making such a mistake? Why do they conflate the stories of Romulus and Ymar?

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sort of along the lines of his Typhon-Alexander connection. The Typhon-Spring Wind (add Windcloud?) connection took longer to gain acceptance but I notice even Gerry is accepting that as a possibility now.

The story of the Boy Called Frog, which clearly originates in a synthesis of Romulus and Remus combined with The Jungle Book, has also incorporated snippets of other mythologies and of ways that people of one era would have understood things of the past. The 'mountaintop beyond the shores of Urth' for example, perhaps incorporates ideas of Mt. Olympus (from the original story), a space station of some kind (or perhaps a territory on Lune), and Wolfe's notion, expressed in an appendix, that the technology/culture of sailing ships and spaceships have somehow become merged. If the not quite central character of Mars incorporated elements of Typhon, it would not be terribly surprising. I don't think there's much reason to support it, but of course it could happen. The thing is, we can tell which way the incorporation goes, because the character of Mars was part of the main original story, and really there's not much to distinguish Spring Wind's nature from the traditional nature of Mars. Another reason to doubt the influence of Typhon on the story is the absence of any two-headed iconography, though of course that's easily explained by saying Wolfe didn't think of that until he started on Long Sun. If Spring Wind did have an allusion involving two heads, we would of course be very comfortable with the notion of a Typhon connection.

As I wrote the above, another example of embellishment with ideas of the time occurred to me: it is in the section where the wolves in their burrow defend Frog from the smilodon. The animals are spoken of as carrying weapons such as knives. There is of course a strong echo here of the idea of bees with swords, which was the concept of bees held by the people immured for generations in the Antechamber. Perhaps Wolfe is suggesting that the tales were transmitted via some antechamber folk who found their way out. Or perhaps these embellishments were added at a time when Urth was a megapolis with few animals. We don't know, and we don't really need to know. The point is the structure, not the embellishments per se.

The truthiness of the connection was subconscious at first but think I understand it now. The Tale of the Boy Called Frog is a story told, by request, to a boy named Little Severian. In UotNS, when Severian meets the boy named Reechy he comes to learn that he is Ymar and thus, essentially, a "little Severian" i.e. a torturer boy who rises to become Autarch. I find this connection more compelling and thus the frog-rana-king connection to be secondary and supporting.

In some ways that works; Wolfe does indeed often include such meta-asides to the reader. The biggest problem with it, I think, is that while Wolfe had already, at the time the tale of Frog reached its final draft, written the Citadel of the Autarch, he had not yet started on Urth of the New Sun, and did not intend to do so. In BotNS, (unless you include Frog!) there is no indication that Ymar was the first Autarch, or was contemporaneous with Typhon. Nor does his contemporaneity with Typhon seem to inform us of anything; indeed I personally think it hurts the story in some ways. I suspect that Wolfe, after he had started on UotNS, decided it would be 'lame' for Severian not to meet Ymar, and wrote it in then.

[This is the obverse of the point about the two-headed Typhon iconography. We cannot reject Typhon as Spring Wind arguments on account of the absence of two-headedness - and equally we must be wary of drawing connections to events in Ymar's life which in all probability were not imagined yet by Wolfe.]

Ymar is the ruler who succeeds Typhon while Frog is the son who succeeds Spring Wind as the hero of the story. No, Ymar didn't found Nessus but he did (I assert) with help from a certain mysterious, magical vizier, found the Commonwealth. A passable parallel to Romulus, imho. Moses was also a founder, though not of a city. We don't know Mowgli's future but I get an intuitive presentiment of greatness from Kipling's writing.

Is Gerry's disbelief in Ymar's twin brother because he would expect that brother to be there as a Torturer's Apprentice?

Yes.

Since we have now established that the Tale of Frog is not a straight rendition of Romulus and Remus can we speculate that perhaps Ymar had a twin sister? Is there a 1000 year old witch in BotNS? (in UotNS I think we also find a magical vizier in Typhon's time).

None that is human, I believe. [As for Inire, if I recall correctly he is said in BotNS to date from the time of Ymar, so if Ymar reigned relatively shortly after Typhon's time then Inire must have appeared then too.]

Unfortunately I cannot get to the text right now. Am I right in remembering the sowing of teeth or stones to grow soldiers in Tale of Boy Called Frog? If so the story also invokes Cadmus, the founder of Thebes and that royal house. As brother to Europa and grandfather to Dionysus, the mythological inclusion of Cadmus might be fruitful in fleshing out more of the Sun Series backstory.

No - he raised an army composed of ordinary men plus wolves.

- Gerry Quinn

James Wynn — 24 May 2011, 16:18 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn:

The 'mountaintop beyond the shores of Urth' for example, perhaps incorporates ideas of Mt. Olympus (from the original story), a space station of some kind (or perhaps a territory on Lune), and Wolfe's notion, expressed in an appendix, that the technology/culture of sailing ships and spaceships have somehow become merged.

As I read this story, its the other way around. The translators have erred in reading reference such as "Mt Olympus" or such in the myths as metaphorical language referring to other planets. They were "rationalizing the myths" just as many mythographers have always done going back to the Greeks. Some saw the gods as great kings of the past. Graves saw them as religio-political allegory. These mythographers saw references to other-worldly mountains and streams as references to other planets and solar systems--a concept that had become mundane to them.

If the not quite central character of Mars incorporated elements of Typhon, it would not be terribly surprising. I don't think there's much reason to support it, but of course it could happen.

Again, I think it is the other way around. Someone looked at the deeds of the Mars character in the story of Romulus and said "Ohhh...this is _actually_ talking about Typhon and this is his son whose name we call "Rana" now.

The thing is, we can tell which way the incorporation goes, because the character of Mars was part of the main original story, and really there's not much to distinguish Spring Wind's nature from the traditional nature of Mars.

Except that his name, "Spring Wind", makes no sense as a designation for Mars. And a garbled retelling the Romulus tale is kind of lame and unimaginative. And, well, there's really nothing Wolfean about that reading. I contend, Wolfe just _would not do_ what you are saying he did. Even a Freshman writer wouldn't do something as lame as that.

Another reason to doubt the influence of Typhon on the story is the absence of any two-headed iconography, though of course that's easily explained by saying Wolfe didn't think of that until he started on Long Sun. If Spring Wind did have an allusion involving two heads, we would of course be very comfortable with the notion of a Typhon connection.

I can't imagine why we would expect this. Typhon's head was grafted on to Piaton only months before his death. The presence of two-headed iconography on the Long Sun only shows that the scans were performed and the ship was launched within that narrow time period.

The biggest problem with it, I think, is that while Wolfe had already, at the time the tale of Frog reached its final draft, written the Citadel of the Autarch, he had not yet started on Urth of the New Sun, and did not intend to do so. In BotNS, (unless you include Frog!) there is no indication that Ymar was the first Autarch, or was contemporaneous with Typhon. Nor does his contemporaneity with Typhon seem to inform us of anything; indeed I personally think it hurts the story in some ways.

It would only be 'lame' for Severian not to meet him IF Wolfe felt he had already informed us that Ymar was contemporaneous with Typhon. It seems to me that this logic is circular: "Wolfe had not considered the intricate details of how the Commonwealth was founded so therefore glimpses in the text that suggest he had are 'fanastical theories'." Rather, it seems to me, the point of the stories are to show that he _had_ considered these things even though he chose not to explain them in Severian's conversations. And we have other examples of this that we know of.

1) Wolfe must have considered who the Conciliator was and what he did that a religion was formed about him. Yet, the text never explicitly identifies Severian as the Conciliator and even UotNS does not detail his teachings. Additionally, even though Typhon must have recognized that Severian was a dead-ringer for the Conciliator and might have guessed that he was a Time-travelling younger self, he never says so either.

2) Wolfe must have considered Severian's future to the extent that he would become Apu Punchau, but never intended to explain how.

3) Wolfe knew that the New Sun would flood the Urth, but only expressed it in the vaguest sense.

4) Dr. Talos's play was once seen as an elaborate mythical creation/amalgam by Wolfe, but is now understood to be a generally factual rendition of true events.

J.

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 24 May 2011, 17:02 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

--- On Tue, 5/24/11, Gerry Quinn <gerryq at indigo.ie> wrote:
From: Gerry Quinn <gerryq at indigo.ie>
Subject: Re: (urth) do the Hierogrammates *care* about the megatherians?
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Date: Tuesday, May 24, 2011, 10:29 AM

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>
Gerry Quinn:

As I wrote the above, another example of embellishment with ideas of the time occurred to me: it is in the section where the wolves in their burrow defend Frog from the smilodon. The animals are spoken of as carrying weapons such as knives. There is of course a strong echo here of the idea of bees with swords, which was the concept of bees held by the people immured for generations in the Antechamber. Perhaps Wolfe is suggesting that the tales were transmitted via some antechamber folk who found their way out. Or perhaps these embellishments were added at a time when Urth was a megapolis with few animals. We don't know, and we don't really need to know. The point is the structure, not the embellishments per se.

The Antechamber always made me think vaguely of Plato's Cave, the way its inhabitants sit telling stories from a world they have never seen and know nothing of except from those stories. On one hand, this is much like mortals trying to figure out the nature of a Divine Being they can't see; on the other, their stories achieve a sort of perfection without the correction that knowledge of the real world would provide. Both ideas are pretty central to Wolfe's approach to myth.

Unfortunately I cannot get to the text right now. Am I right in remembering the sowing of teeth or stones to grow soldiers in Tale of Boy Called Frog? If so the story also invokes Cadmus, the founder of Thebes and that royal house. As brother to Europa and grandfather to Dionysus, the mythological inclusion of Cadmus might be fruitful in fleshing out more of the Sun Series backstory.

No - he raised an army composed of ordinary men plus wolves.

Are you sure? I also was reminded of the Jason story.

Lee Berman — 24 May 2011, 17:20 · follows DAVID STOCKHOFF

Gerry Quinn: The story of the Boy Called Frog, which clearly originates in a synthesis of Romulus and Remus combined with The Jungle Book, has also incorporated snippets of other mythologies and of ways that people of one era would have understood things of the past....

Nice response, Gerry! I would agree with most of it. I agree that if Ymar is meant to be Frog it was a contrivance made for UotNS only. It would involve Wolfe saying, "okay, I've included a historical view of Typhon but who can I add to show that Frog was also a real historical

figure...hm..who founded the Commonwealth...ah! Ymar.

There is of course a strong echo here of the idea of bees with swords, which was the concept of bees held by the people immured for generations in the Antechamber. Perhaps Wolfe is suggesting that the tales were transmitted via some antechamber folk who found their way out.

It's possible. A good idea. But the story of wolves carrying knives might also be akin to the stories we hear of lower animals developing versions of human speech and writing. Or it could be a degenerate, wolf-like group of humans who retain manual dexterity. Or it could be that Frog was raised by a human group known as the Wolf Clan and the tales converted them to their namesake.

But you are correct in thinking it doesn't matter too much. What matters is that we get the interactive relationship between reality, history and mythology. I think you've denied that relationship as relevant to Wolfe's writing in the past but perhaps there is a growing awareness of how essential it is for understanding. Your quick switch from denial of Jungle Book influence on the Frog story to assimilation was impressive.

We cannot reject Typhon as Spring Wind arguments on account of the absence of two-headedness.

Correct, but not for the reason you suggest. On the Whorl, Typhon's two-headedness is common knowledge.

Not so on Urth. It was a recent development and a deep secret. Thus Spring Wind (the youthful, sober thoughtful Alexander) would never have two heads in legends that circulated on Urth. It is the wind allusions and the youth/older life history of Alexander which connect Spring Wind and Typhon, not heads.

Is there a 1000 year old witch in BotNS? None that is human, I believe.

I didn't say "human" witch. If Ymar and twin sister are descendents of Typhon can we be sure the whole family is (fully) human? I don't think so. Since I question whether Severian is fully human, I don't have much of a problem asking the same question about Ymar. Moreover a snake-essense daughter of Typhon fits rather nicely with his mythological namesake. Wouldn't the snaky Cumaeon make a nice sister or half-sister to snaky Scylla?

As for Inire, if I recall correctly he is said in BotNS to date from the time of Ymar

In my view that is when he started using the name "Inire". But in UotNS, Severian rather inexplicably encounters a real wizard/necromancer named Ceryx. Immediately after their encounter, Severian is captured and brought in front of the highly sequestered Typhon. Rather than dismiss Ceryx as a one-off, I think he

is the vizier (and magic investigator) for Typhon. In other words, he is Inire, serving in the same capacity that he will serve the Autarchs.

In my view, most of Severian's adventures (Dorcas, Sanguinary Fields, Vodalus/Thecla, Old Leech etc.) are pieces set up by this necromancer to try to winnow from him the secret of true resurrection.

(p.s.thanks for the Cadmus related info.)

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 24 May 2011, 18:21 · in reply to Lee Berman

Severian is not immediately arrested after his meeting with Ceryx. Ceryx creates a "zombie" from a drowned young man. Zombie tries to kill Severian, becomes truly alive due to Severian, and kills Ceryx in the morning (and is killed by the mob). Then Severian travels on a boat to Saltus, young Burgundofara who was with Severian finds a lover, Severian almost destroys the boath because his wrath produced a storm, and is denounced to the authorities by Burgundofara and her lover. Maybe somebody else as well. He is accompanied by the followers who think him to be the Consiliator, and this of course cannot be tolerated by the dictatorial regime of Typhon.

Best

Sergei Soloviev

Lee Berman wrote:

Gerry Quinn: The story of the Boy Called Frog, which clearly originates in a synthesis of Romulus and Remus combined with The Jungle Book, has also incorporated snippets of other mythologies and of ways that people of one era would have understood things of the past....

Nice response, Gerry! I would agree with most of it. I agree that if Ymar is meant to be Frog it was a contrivance made for UotNS only. It would involve Wolfe saying, "okay, I've included a historical view of Typhon but who can I add to show that Frog was also a real historical figure...hm..who founded the Commonwealth...ah! Ymar.

There is of course a strong echo here of the idea of bees with swords, which was the concept of bees held by the people immured for generations in the Antechamber. Perhaps Wolfe is suggesting that the tales were transmitted via some antechamber folk who found their way out.

It's possible. A good idea. But the story of wolves carrying knives might also be akin to the stories we hear of lower animals developing versions of human speech and writing. Or it could be a degenerate, wolf-like group of humans who retain manual dexterity. Or it could be that Frog was raised by a human group known as the Wolf Clan and the tales converted them to their namesake.

But you are correct in thinking it doesn't matter too much. What matters is that we get the interactive relationship between reality, history and mythology. I think you've denied that relationship as relevant to Wolfe's writing in the past but perhaps there is a growing awareness of how essential it is for understanding. Your quick switch from denial of Jungle Book influence on the Frog story to assimilation was impressive.

We cannot reject Typhon as Spring Wind arguments on account of the absence of two-headedness.

Correct, but not for the reason you suggest. On the Whorl, Typhon's two-headedness is common knowledge.

Not so on Urth. It was a recent development and a deep secret. Thus Spring Wind (the youthful, sober thoughtful Alexander) would never have two heads in legends that circulated on Urth. It is the wind allusions and the youth/older life history of Alexander which connect Spring Wind and Typhon, not heads.

Is there a 1000 year old witch in BotNS? None that is human, I believe.

I didn't say "human" witch. If Ymar and twin sister are descendents of Typhon can we be sure the whole family is (fully) human? I don't think so. Since I question whether Severian is fully human, I don't have much of a problem asking the same question about Ymar. Moreover a snake-essence daughter of Typhon fits rather nicely with his mythological namesake. Wouldn't the snaky Cumaeon make a nice sister or half-sister to snaky Scylla?

As for Inire, if I recall correctly he is said in BotNS to date from the time of Ymar

In my view that is when he started using the name "Inire". But in UotNS, Severian rather inexplicably encounters a real wizard/necromancer named Ceryx. Immediately after their encounter, Severian is captured and brought in front of the highly sequestered Typhon. Rather than dismiss Ceryx as a one-off, I think he is the vizier (and magic investigator) for Typhon. In other words, he is Inire, serving in the same capacity that he will serve the Autarchs.

Lee Berman — 24 May 2011, 20:15 · follows Sergei SOLOVIEV

Sergei Soloviev: Severian is not immediately arrested after his meeting with Ceryx. Ceryx creates a "zombie" from a drowned young man. Zombie tries to kill Severian, becomes truly alive due to Severian, and kills Ceryx in the morning (and is killed by the mob). Then Severian travels on a boat to Saltus, He is accompanied by the followers who think him to be the Consiliator, and this of course cannot be tolerated by the dictatorial regime of Typhon.

I consider the whole episode with Zama and his resurrection to be a part of Severian's encounter with Ceryx. Severian's power of healing, life and death is proven.

You are right that there is the interlude of the boat ride before Severian is arrested. But your hypothesis that Severian is arrested by a large group of soldiers and taken to the Citadel and then to Typhon himself because he has collected a few followers doesn't ring true for me. Like hitting a tack with a sledge hammer.

Moreover, when Typhon speaks with Severian it isn't about political power. It is about his power as a medical wonderworker. And we know that Typhon is currently undergoing a medical

emergency. I don't think it is a coincidence.

Ah the price of arrogance ;-). He had to demand a demonstration of power from Severian. If Typhon

had summoned Severian and asked him nicely for some help with his nerve grafts, he might have gotten it.

Moreover if he'd asked Severian nicely to be his regent on Urth, in the future, he might have gotten that

also (Severian is no Jesus and the Thecla within him desired a throne).

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 25 May 2011, 10:54 · in reply to Lee Berman

Dear Lee,

thank you very much for the detailed answer. I will update my arguments below, but let me clarify one point before -

you write

I think it was Sergei (in his other guise) who used to complain about too many JW's.

I have no other guise here! I am one of the "resident russian professors" mentioned in some other posting - I work in France (since 1998), and I know Jerry Friedman due to Nabokov List. You can find me easily (with references to some math papers) via google.

Lee Berman wrote:

Sergei Soloviev: Severian is not immediately arrested after his meeting with Ceryx. Ceryx creates a "zombie" from a drowned young man. Zombie tries to kill Severian, becomes truly alive due to Severian, and kills Ceryx in the morning (and is killed by the mob). Then Severian travels on a boat to Saltus, He is accompanied by the followers who think him to be the Consiliator, and this of course cannot be tolerated by the dictatorial regime of Typhon.

I consider the whole episode with Zama and his resurrection to be a part of Severian's encounter with Ceryx. Severian's power of healing, life and death is proven.

We know that there are many biblical parallels. Ceryx corresponds rather to Simon the Magus, who had a magical contest with St. Peter, used his power to fly and fell down and died when Peter did pray. In Wolfe's text Severian thinks that while he travelled to Yesod, Ceryx probably travelled to some other "dark" worlds. So Ceryx is compared (and opposed) to Severian in his humanity, he is not an "alien" like Father Inire. He is a sort of potential Antichrist who fails miserably before developing his full power.

You are right that there is the interlude of the boat ride before Severian is arrested. But your hypothesis that Severian is arrested by a large group of soldiers and taken to the Citadel and then to Typhon himself because he has collected a few followers doesn't ring true for me. Like hitting a tack with a sledge hammer.

You forget the details - the group of soldiers had no intention and no order to take Severian to Typhon at the moment of his arrest. If not his miraculous powers, he would die - they had beaten him mercilessly. They started to respect him because he recovered and because one of the soldiers he killed was resurrected by him. (And because they started to believe that he may be the Consiliator. Obviously, the legend was already common knowledge, like messianic legends in Jesus time.)

When he was taken to the Citadel, it was for questioning by "Madame Prefect" - it seems that she would torture him to death again, so, it was no order (yet) to take him to Typhon. When he killed her, one of the weapons on the top of the tower was used as on any escaped criminal - and an ordinary man would die (again). It is not the way to respect the order of a dictator.

One more argument - what you say here applies also to Christ (in political context). In Wolfe's text it is remarked that after the story with Ceryx it was already hundreds, if not thousands of followers. Did Christ entering Jerusalem have "a few followers"? Was his arrest and crucifixion "like hitting a tack with a sledge hammer"? If you read the Bible, you see that Pilatus was more or less of this opinion, but political intrigue... And for Typhon and his regime it was the time of troubles.

Moreover, when Typhon speaks with Severian it isn't about political power. It is about his power as a medical wonderworker. And we know that Typhon is currently undergoing a medical emergency. I don't think it is a coincidence.

Ah the price of arrogance ;-). He had to demand a demonstration of power from Severian. If Typhon had summoned Severian and asked him nicely for some help with his nerve grafts, he might have gotten it.

Moreover if he'd asked Severian nicely to be his regent on Urth, in the future, he might have gotten that

also (Severian is no Jesus and the Thecla within him desired a throne).

You forget that Severian had already met Typhon and knew what kind of power Typhon would represent. By the way, the scene in the skill of the Typhon's monument (the mountain) in "the Sword of the Lictor" has also a biblical parallel - Devil tempting Jesus in the desert. Devil had taken Jesus to the top of a mountain etc.

James Wynn — 25 May 2011, 11:19 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

Lee:

I think it was Sergei (in his other guise) who used to complain about too many JW's.

I have no other guise here! I am one of the "resident russian professors" mentioned in some other posting - I work in France (since 1998), and I know Jerry Friedman due to Nabokov List. You can find me easily (with references to some math papers) via google.

Can one have too many JWs? Really? Think about it.

I think I remember who thought there were too many JWs and when he left the list he invited me to friend him on Facebook. But his profile said "Those Who wish to interact with Me should be aware that I do not consider it in any way wrong, and May choose, to physically Harm those who insult Me." I had already felt too close to him, so I decided to remove one more JW from his intimate circle.

J.

James Wynn — 25 May 2011, 11:31 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

Sergei:

By the way, the scene in the skill of the Typhon's monument (the

mountain) in "the Sword of the Lictor"
has also a biblical parallel - Devil tempting Jesus in the desert.
Devil had taken Jesus to the top of
a mountain etc.

Also, Typhon offered Severian food (although Severian takes it unJesus-like) and dangled him over the precipice.

J.

Lee Berman — 25 May 2011, 12:43 · follows James Wynn

Sergei Soloviev: We know that there are many biblical parallels. Ceryx corresponds rather to Simon the Magus, who had a magical contest with St. Peter....By the way, the scene in the skill of the Typhon's monument (the mountain) in "the Sword of the Lictor" has also a biblical parallel - Devil tempting Jesus in the desert. Devil had taken Jesus to the top of a mountain etc.

I don't see how the Biblical parallels undermine my view of the connection between Ceryx and Typhon. I would say they bolster them. We have a Severian-Typhon encounter which echoes Jesus and The Devil. A Severian-Ceryx encounter which echoes Peter and Simon Magus. So, as Peter served Jesus, (and perhaps Simon Magus served The Devil), it isn't a stretch to conclude Ceryx served Typhon.

Severian thinks that while he travelled to Yesod, Ceryx probably travelled to some other "dark" worlds. So Ceryx is compared (and opposed) to Severian in his humanity, he is not an "alien" like Father Inire. He is a sort of potential Antichrist who fails miserably before developing his full power.

First, I can't see travel to dark worlds as evidence for humanity. Quite the opposite. In my view, Severian's comparison should be taken more celestially. As Yesod (heaven analog) is the universe higher than Severian's, I think he implies Ceryx has been to Abaddon (hell analog), the universe which is lower than Severian's. Again, a Typhon/Devil connection for Ceryx.

Plus, as has been discussed previously, there is much in the text to suggest Father Inire's power is

dark and monstrous in origin. Moreover, he is a small, twisted, long-lived alien, who is highly involved in the intimate workings of the Commonwealth. He is the exact opposite of the tall, beautiful, short-lived, angelic Hierodules (B,F & O) who keep their distance from humanity.

Again,

the implication, for me, is that Inire is a fallen version of these angels. Hence another link between
Inire and Ceryx.

Second, I am not so sure Severian really is 100% human. His ancestry is quite deliberately masked,

and we have a mysterious alien who is labelled "Father" but seems to have no religious function.

Past discussions outline the elusive evidence I see that Inire is Dorcas' husband and thus Severian's

grandfather. Moreover I've argued that over and over in legend, it is the "half-breed" who serves as

The Conciliator between Man and God(s). Hercules and Jesus are fine examples. (It is for this reason

I like James' theory of the tripartite nature of that other Wolfe Conciliator, Silkhorn)

(hm...the Antichrist is supposed to be a half-breed also, yes?)

You forget the details - the group of soldiers had no intention and no order to take Severian to Typhon at the moment of his arrest. If not his miraculous powers, he would die - they had beaten him mercilessly.

If their purpose had been to kill him, they would have just shot him (like bin Laden?). They were clearly going for a capture and a trip to the torturers for questioning. Somebody wanted information from Severian, not just his elimination. I can agree that Typhon's immediate attention and audience was called from Severian's recovery from the Disruptor at the Citadel more than the previous rumors, and I'll adjust my theory accordingly!

p.s. apologies for the misidentification. Plus I'm glad James is safe from the physical violence threatened by that other guy :-).

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 25 May 2011, 13:31 · in reply to Lee Berman

Dear Lee,

Lee Berman wrote:

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There is a connection between Ceryx and Typhon as it is between any evildoer and the Diable. (But Typhon to me is not Diable, only more powerful representative.) What I object, is that Ceryx is a direct subordinate, and can communicate directly with Typhon. There is no proof of it.

Severian thinks that while he travelled to Yesod, Ceryx probably travelled to some other "dark" worlds. So Ceryx is compared (and opposed) to Severian in his humanity, he is not an "alien" like Father Inire. He is a sort of potential Antichrist who fails miserably before developing his full power.

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Plus, as has been discussed previously, there is much in the text to suggest Father Inire's power is dark and monstrous in origin. Moreover, he is a small, twisted, long-lived alien, who is highly involved in the intimate workings of the Commonwealth. He is the exact opposite of the tall,

beautiful, short-lived, angelic Hierodules (B,F & O) who keep their distance from humanity. Again, the implication, for me, is that Inire is a fallen version of these angels. Hence another link between Inire and Ceryx.

And with all his power he cannot find Dorcas (who, as you believe, was his wife!).

Second, I am not so sure Severian really is 100% human. His ancestry is quite deliberately masked, and we have a mysterious alien who is labelled "Father" but seems to have no religious function. Past discussions outline the elusive evidence I see that Inire is Dorcas' husband and thus Severian's grandfather. Moreover I've argued that over and over in legend, it is the "half-breed" who serves as The Conciliator between Man and God(s). Hercules and Jesus are fine examples. (It is for this reason I like James' theory of the tripartite nature of that other Wolfe Conciliator, Silkhorn)

(hm...the Antichrist is supposed to be a half-breed also, yes?)

To me, in Wolfe's books is very important the brilliant rendering of human psychology

and human existential problems. The presence of aliens, miracles, strange world serve this purpose. What you are trying to do, is to transform everything into myth about demi-gods, aliens etc and if you push it to the extreme, it will have for me no human interest. Look - the old guy looking for Cas is interesting because it is a poor old guy, living in a slum and looking for his lost wife and love all fifty years or so. If he is father Inire in disguise - it is not interesting. The Old Autarch is interesting because he is a weak old guy castrated by aliens and he suffers. He failed as a representative of Humankind. He would be not interesting, if he would himself be an alien. What a castrated alien means, anyway? There is no interesting psychology of aliens in the Book of the New Sun. They are the "data", the powers, the symbols, but living characters are human. There is no psychology of Abaia or Scylla or Mother because it didn't interest Wolfe. Baldanders is human in his way to something else, in transformation, and as such he is interesting. Doctor Talos is his "homunculus", probably clone, and in this also human. Apheta in Yesod has no psychology, Tzadkiel - no, nothing interesting. Maybe, from catholic (Wolfe's) point of view, they are not interesting because they have no soul.

I think to some extent I understand the purpose of Wolfe and this is why I admire

him - and what you try to prove seems to me directly opposite to his purpose. (Instead of discovering human side in myths you try to erase human part and see only mythic.)

You forget the details - the group of soldiers had no intention and no order to take Severian to Typhon at the moment of his arrest. If not his miraculous powers, he would die - they had beaten him mercilessly.

If their purpose had been to kill him, they would have just shot him (like bin Laden?). They were clearly going for a capture and a trip to the torturers for questioning. Somebody wanted information from Severian, not just his elimination.

They just wanted to follow the rules - they didn't mind to kill him, otherwise they would beat him less, how they could know that he will survive and recover? They had no purpose of their own - it was totalitarian society - they had their orders! Arrest, and if he will die of beating - well... If they had orders to keep him alive whatever the price, they risked severe punishment themselves.

I can agree that Typhon's immediate attention and audience was called from Severian's recovery from the Disruptor at the Citadel more than the previous rumors, and I'll adjust my

theory accordingly!

p.s. apologies for the misidentification. Plus I'm glad James is safe from the physical violence threatened by that other guy :-).

James Wynn — 25 May 2011, 14:14 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

On 5/25/2011 8:31 AM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:

Look - the old guy looking for Cas is interesting because it is a poor old guy, living in a slum and looking for his lost wife and love all fifty years or so.

I always found it interesting that the old guy and Ouen appeared so estranged. That's the other thing that throws people. Yeah, Ouen is Dorcas' son, but is that old guy really Ouen's father? Severian tells Ouen about Dorcas, but there's no record of him telling the poor old fart who's trolling for her body.

J.

Jerry Friedman — 25 May 2011, 14:21 · in reply to James Wynn

From: James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com>

Jerry Friedman:

Okay, is there an objection to the idea that the "megatherian" human rulers were early rulers of Ascia? We don't know why 17, but if there are 17 sea creatures, we don't know why that number either. (Other than the reference to the Politburo in either case, or the speculations in my previous post.)

It's true that the relation of the present "Group of 17" to these hypothetical 17 founders is vague, but so is the relation of the present "Group of 17" to the hypothetical 17 sea creatures.

Well, my objection is this.

It seems to me we agree that the term "megatherian" is *related* to the giant alien powers--because Abaia is called a "Great Beast". The only doubt is whether the term refers _directly_ to the alien powers.

The "17 stones" and "the Group of 17" are enumerated by human choice. Someone decided they should be that number. That leaves only the "17 megatherians" _possibly_ NOT being humanly enumerated. So unless the number 17 is derived from some source unnamed in the book, it seems most likely that the 17 Megatherians is the source of the other two.

True, it could be that 17 Megatherians and the Group of 17 are somehow equivalent (getting their name from an association with the alien powers). But that just adds a level of complication. You have to suppose why the group of 17 got that name, how the government of the Ascians led to a tradition in the Commonwealth, and any additional issues of speculation.

On the other hand, if one accepts that alien powers number 17 and are called Megatherians because they are "like great beasts", then the selection of the number 17 elsewhere is self-explanatory.

It is marginally easier (given the reference to Abaia as a Great Beast) to decide the alien powers are the Megatherians.

...

Thanks for the reply. I think we'll have to disagree on what is simpler and what is more complicated, what is self-explanatory and what is a puzzle. But we seem to agree that the difference between these two speculations isn't great.

On a related subject, thanks to Nick Gevers for bringing up the "Group of Seventeen" that ran the Dutch East India Company.

Jerry Friedman

Gerry Quinn — 25 May 2011, 14:59 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>

Gerry Quinn: The story of the Boy Called Frog, which clearly originates in a synthesis of Romulus and Remus combined with The Jungle Book, has also incorporated snippets of other mythologies and of ways that people of one era would have understood things of the past....

Nice response, Gerry! I would agree with most of it. I agree that if Ymar is meant to be Frog it was a contrivance made for UotNS only. It would involve Wolfe saying, "okay, I've included a historical view of Typhon but who can I add to show that Frog was also a real historical figure...hm..who founded the Commonwealth...ah! Ymar.

But UotNS didn't exist at the time, and wasn't intended. In my view, there is no substantive evidence that either Typhon or Ymar play any role in the Tale of the Boy Called Frog. I have said that I could imagine in principle that Spring Wind could contain echoes of Typhon, but I don't see any real indication that he does. Mars is Spring, and Spring Wind has all the characteristics of Mars. All you and James have to go on is 'Wind' (pun unavoidable). My view is that "Spring" was simply too short and cryptic a name, too obviously fraught with symbolism. So Wolfe added the second word, which can allude both to the life-giving rain-bearing wind of Spring and the destructive winds of war. The first was Early Summer's intention, the second was the interpretation of Spring Wind's men. And if there is any incorporation of Typhon in the story, a pun on 'Typhoon' here is probably the extent of it., i.e. a historical general whose name sounds a bit like 'Wind'. In general the history and behaviour of Spring Wind are those of Mars, cleaving quite close to the traditions of the original story - and not at all those of Typhon.

There is of course a strong echo here of the idea of bees with swords, which was the concept of bees held by the people immured for generations in the Antechamber. Perhaps Wolfe is suggesting that the tales were transmitted via some antechamber folk who found their way out.

It's possible. A good idea. But the story of wolves carrying knives might also be akin to the stories we hear of lower animals developing versions of human speech and writing. Or it could be a degenerate, wolf-like group of humans who retain manual dexterity. Or it could be that Frog was raised by a human group known as the Wolf Clan and the tales converted them to their namesake.

Sure. But the idea of the natural weapons of animals being mistaken for knives and swords is not exactly common, so the coincidence is interesting.

But you are correct in thinking it doesn't matter too much. What matters is that we get the interactive relationship between reality, history and mythology. I think you've denied that relationship as relevant to Wolfe's writing in the past but perhaps there is a growing awareness of how essential it is for understanding. Your quick switch from denial of Jungle Book influence on the Frog story to assimilation was impressive.

As I have pointed out already, I did NOT at any point deny the influence of the Jungle Book on elements of the entirety of the Tale of the Boy Named Frog. What I said was that the Jungle Book influence was centred on the Senate of Wolves section, in which Frog doesn't really play a role, and the story of Frog himself derives almost in its entirety from that of Romulus. I have accepted that two elements of the Jungle Book did become entwined more with Frog than I realised, i.e. his name apparently comes from Mowgli, which I had not known, and the idea of the Red Flower in the Jungle Book. [In fact, in both cases Wolfe has mixed both tales - the Red Flower is mixed with the Magic Flower of the original Romulus story, and the alliteration of Romulus and Remus is preserved in the names Frog and Fish.]

If you want an idea I abandoned quickly, look to my idea that Spring Wind was Hercules and the flower was Zeus. I dropped that quickly when Andrew pointed out the significance of the flower in the traditional story of Mars. On consideration, it became clear that Spring Wind is Mars, not Hercules.

But yes, the point of the Tale of the Boy Called Frog is largely about the relationship between history and mythology, and about how stories mutate with successive tellings and yet remain the same. What it is not, in my view, is some cypher encoding a secret history of Urth, to be unlocked by all manner of wordplay and far-fetched analogies.

We cannot reject Typhon as Spring Wind arguments on account of the absence of two-headedness.

Correct, but not for the reason you suggest. On the Whorl, Typhon's two-headedness is common knowledge.

Not so on Urth. It was a recent development and a deep secret. Thus Spring Wind (the youthful, sober thoughtful Alexander) would never have two heads in legends that circulated on Urth. It is the wind allusions and the youth/older life history of Alexander which connect Spring Wind and Typhon, not heads.

Maybe so. [Though I suspect Wolfe would have used the two-headed iconography widely had he thought of it; clearly, however, it only came to him when he started BotLS.] As for Alexander, I don't know why you are dragging him into the story. I see no relevance at all except that he as some random great general from history; unlike Typhon, his history does not even have the virtue of being relatively recent to Severian's time. The Alexander idea seems particularly

bizarre when you consider that Alexander is already dust. Perhaps he is already embedded to some degree in the story of Romulus that has come to us from Roman times. But if not, it's hard to see why he should be added chiliads from now. Possible, yes. Supported, doubtful.

Is there a 1000 year old witch in BotNS? None that is human, I believe.

I didn't say "human" witch. If Ymar and twin sister are descendents of Typhon can we be sure the whole family is (fully) human? I don't think so. Since I question whether Severian is fully human, I don't have much of a problem asking the same question about Ymar. Moreover a snake-essense daughter of Typhon fits rather nicely with his mythological namesake. Wouldn't the snaky Cumaean make a nice sister or half-sister to snaky Scylla?

There is no evidence that any of these characters are not, at the very least, substantially and overtly human, apart from the Cumaean, who is apparently old but may or may not be very ancient but in any case is well known to be a cagogen like Inire. It just amounts to another variant on your "everybody might be everybody else, every theory is equally valid" concept of literary analysis. Anyway, this idea can easily be nipped in the bud by remembering that if Ymar had a twin sister, she would have been serving with him in the Matachin Tower. Women were not barred from the Torturers' Guild until an edict of Ymar's, after he became Autarch. Take note of the sadistic Madame Prefect in UotNS - she may be a nod to the reasons why.

As for Inire, if I recall correctly he is said in BotNS to date from the time of Ymar

In my view that is when he started using the name "Inire". But in UotNS, Severian rather inexplicably encounters a real wizard/necromancer named Ceryx. Immediately after their encounter, Severian is captured and brought in front of the highly sequestered Typhon. Rather than dismiss Ceryx as a one-off, I think he is the vizier (and magic investigator) for Typhon. In other words, he is Inire, serving in the same capacity that he will serve the Autarchs.

In my view, most of Severian's adventures (Dorcas, Sanguinary Fields, Vodalus/Thecla, Old Leech etc.) are pieces set up by this necromancer to try to winnow from him the secret of true resurrection.

I prefer the book Wolfe wrote.

- Gerry Quinn

Jeff Wilson — 25 May 2011, 15:53 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 5/25/2011 7:43 AM, Lee Berman wrote:
(hm...the Antichrist is supposed to be a half-breed also, yes?)

Only in that he has to be superficially Christlike to fool the masses.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Jeff Wilson — 25 May 2011, 15:57 · in reply to James Wynn

On 5/25/2011 9:14 AM, James Wynn wrote:
On 5/25/2011 8:31 AM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:

Look - the old guy looking for Cas is interesting
because it is a poor old guy, living in a slum and looking for his
lost wife and love
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I always found it interesting that the old guy and Ouen appeared so
estranged. That's the other thing that throws people. Yeah, Ouen is
Dorcas' son, but is that old guy really Ouen's father? Severian tells
Ouen about Dorcas, but there's no record of him telling the poor old
fart who's trolling for her body.

Sev sees that the old fart has died before he got around to telling him.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
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James Wynn — 25 May 2011, 17:00 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

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estranged. That's the other thing that throws people. Yeah, Ouen is
Dorcas' son, but is that old guy really Ouen's father? Severian tells
Ouen about Dorcas, but there's no record of him telling the poor old
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Jeff Wilson:
Sev sees that the old fart has died before he got around to telling him.

James Wynn:
Yeah, but Sev is a Time-traveler. This is his grandfather after all. Granted, Severian doesn't tell
us everything.

J.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 25 May 2011, 17:05 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:
Yeah, but Sev is a Time-traveler. This is his grandfather after all.
Granted, Severian doesn't tell us everything.

Yeah, no. I don't see Sev travelling down the timestream to tell the old man, "Hey, Grampa, you
know Gramma? Well, I screwed her all the way to Thrax."

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Adam Thornton IO — 25 May 2011, 17:22 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Wed, 25 May 2011 10:05:49 -0700, "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes"

<danldo at gmail.com>
wrote:
James Wynn wrote:

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Granted, Severian doesn't tell us everything.

Yeah, no. I don't see Sev travelling down the timestream to tell the
old man, "Hey, Grampa, you know Gramma? Well, I screwed her all the
way to Thrax."

Particularly since given Wolfe's admitted liking of filk and folk, and the presence of multiple iterations of Severian, he almost certainly *is* his own grandpa.

Adam

James Wynn — 25 May 2011, 17:43 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

James Wynn:

Yeah, but Sev is a Time-traveler. This is his grandfather after all.
Granted, Severian doesn't tell us everything.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes:

Yeah, no. I don't see Sev travelling down the timestream to tell the old man, "Hey, Grampa, you know Gramma? Well, I screwed her all the way to Thrax."

I doubt that information would have gone over any better with Ouen. Sev maneuvered nicely around that bit of doo-dah and even the fact that he was his son in case it came up.

Incidentally, even though Agia does not sell out of the same shop as Sevs grandparents, she and her brother are shopkeepers. And there is this bit of juxtapositioning in Citadel:

"Another man, living in the midst of millions, may be alone, because there are none but enemies and victims around him. Agia, whom I might have loved, has chosen instead to become a female Vodalus, taking all that lives most fully in humanity as her opponent. I, who might have loved **Agia**, who loved **Dorcas** deeply but perhaps not deeply enough, was now alone because I had become a part of her past, which she loved better than she had ever (except, I think, at first) loved me."

So, I think that those that speculate that the two might be related are not at sea without jib or anchor.

J.

Lee Berman — 25 May 2011, 17:44 · follows Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn: I prefer the book Wolfe wrote.

Don't be a asshole , Gerry. Whom does your sarcasm benefit? The book Gene Wolfe wrote contains characters such as Vodalus, Hildegren, The Cumaeon and the Old Leech and Ceryx who are tied together by the theme of necromancy. If you don't see this connecting theme that's fine. But I feel no need to mock you nor to insinuate you must be reading a Stephen King novel to have missed it. Perhaps you could dampen your lively critical spirits just enough to show respect for others, eh, wot?

António Pedro Marques — 25 May 2011, 18:21 · in reply to Lee Berman

No dia 25/05/2011, às 18:44, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> escreveu:

I feel no need to mock you

Should we assume it's been unintentional the dozen odd times you've seemed to try it before?

Lee Berman — 25 May 2011, 18:43 · follows James Wynn

Sergei SOLOVIEV: To me, in Wolfe's books is very important the brilliant rendering of human psychology and human existential problems. The presence of aliens, miracles, strange world serve this purpose. What you are trying to do, is to transform everything

into myth about demi-gods, aliens etc and if you push it to the extreme, it will have for me no human interest.

This is a very personal objection to my view, Sergei and I respect it. I wouldn't try to diminish your enjoyment of Wolfe's work by insisting my view is in any way superior to yours or others.

I will say this. I spent quite a few years enjoying BotNS simply as a wonderful SF/Fantasy story and a pleasant excursion within the thoughts of a passably bright heroic figure who only partially understands what is going on around him as he engages in a series of planetary and cosmic adventures. But I always felt there was more to it, which is why I came to this List.

The ideas found here and in a study of Gene Wolfe interviews have also lead me to view the story from a psychological perspective. But not my personal psychology nor some generic view of the psychology of all humanity. Aside from my initial enjoyment of this story, my interest is very specifically in the psychology of Gene Wolfe. What motivated him to write this story (and others) the way he did? Though I don't expect all other to agree with my conclusions, I think my posts are best interpreted if my true goal is understood.

My broad conclusions are that Gene Wolfe is a very religious man, but not in the traditional Catholic sense. I think he (like Rudesind) is an advocate for the dead, meaning that he considers the ancients to have been just as smart and aware of reality as we are today. Thus the mythology of the past was simply the best way our ancestors had to describe their world and our current religions (including Catholocism) are neither better nor worse than Greek or Norse mythology in describing cosmic/divine reality. Thus the pagan gods are, in some sense, real.

I believe (again, from interviews) that Wolfe did not intend Urth to be Earth but rather sort of a parallel place a..."gnostic parody of Earth" is how David recently put it. A place where there was no Jesus, resulting in the primacy of mythological sorts of beings rather than Christianity. I think it is meant to be unclear whether Earth legends of people like "Typhon" are the result of earthian analogs or the leaking of mythology from Urth to Earth. Doesn't matter. They are real somewhere.

Does it diminish human psychology and experience if we find there are longer-lived, more powerful, more intelligent, more sighted, perceptive beings than we? I don't think so, nor does Wolfe, I think. It isn't that "aliens" have no psychology. But rather that their thinking is both too different and too superior for humans to grasp. I think we get enough conversation from Inire, The Cumaeen, B, F and O, and Tzadkiel (and The Mother, and Neighbors and Inhumi) to grasp a bit of their psychology. But if the idea ruins BotNS for you, then it is an idea you should scrap.

Okay, specifics objections-

Sergei: Look - the old guy looking for Cas is interesting because it is a poor old guy, living in a slum and looking for his lost wife and love all fifty years or so. If he is father Inire in disguise - it is not interesting.

Well, tastes differ. The Gene Wolfe quote below suggests to me that it would be interesting to him

GW: in fact there is one place in the Acts where Paul and another one of the apostles are mistaken... for Zeus and Hermes in human form because people in those days expected that you could see Zeus and Hermes in human form. I am not so sure they were wrong. I am not convinced that they were wrong. We love to think how much smarter we are than people of ancient times or biblical times or so forth but

I am very dubious about that.

Sergei: The Old Autarch is interesting because he is a weak old guy castrated by aliens and he suffers.

He failed as a representative of Humankind. He would be not interesting, if he would himself be an alien.

The failure of the old Autarch is never really explained. He seems be everything Severian is: a servant to

the Throne elevated to Autarch, he has the memories of all the previous Autarchs, he is a kindly and decent

good-hearted guy. He fights the Ascians, he cooperates with Father Inire. Why does he fail?

My explanation is that he is too human to be the New Sun. To be the New Sun one needs a super-human capacity for energy, which Severian shows. And one needs to be both Son of Man and Son of God(s). A half-breed as I think Severian, like other Conciliators of legend, is.

Sergei- And with all his (Inire's) power he cannot find Dorcas (who, as you believe, was his wife!).

No. Just the opposite. I think Inire knows exactly where Dorcas' body is. He has arranged this meeting

with a purpose. No accident that another seeker of dead bodies is also there (Hildegryn). Of all the

thousands of bodies which might float up and be resurrected by Severian, the one that arrives is Dorcas? Not a coincidence. What I think Inire (like Ceryx, like Tzadkiel even) cannot do is a true

resurrection. That power is reserved for a Christ-figure. And I think Inire hopes to both use Severian's

nascent power of resurrection on his long-dead wife and to learn how to use it himself.

Lee Berman — 25 May 2011, 18:45 · follows Lee Berman

(hm...the Antichrist is supposed to be a half-breed also, yes?)

Jeff Wilson: Only in that he has to be superficially Christlike to fool the masses.

Hm. Isn't the Antichrist supposed to be the son of Satan and some mortal woman? Or have I been watching too many errant movies?

Lane Haygood — 25 May 2011, 18:59 · in reply to Lee Berman

As best I can recall, there is tenuous Biblical support for the idea of an Antichrist as an evil Jesus type. 2nd John or something mentions many "anti-Christ's" arising, in the sense of there being many opposed to Jesus, and Christian eschatological writings talks of a "beast from the land" who preaches false prophecy during armageddon, but the popular, Damien-like Antichrist figure is pure fantasy.

Sent from my iPhone

On May 25, 2011, at 1:45 PM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

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Jeff Wilson: Only in that he has to be superficially Christlike to fool the masses.

Hm. Isn't the Antichrist supposed to be the son of Satan and some mortal woman? Or have I been watching too many errant movies?

Lee Berman — 25 May 2011, 18:59 · follows António Pedro Marques

I feel no need to mock you

Antonio- Should we assume it's been unintentional the dozen odd times you've seemed to try it before?

Perhaps I should have said "mock your intelligence". I am not by nature a mocking or sarcastic sort of person. My guess is that any disparaging remark made by me toward Gerry has been in regard to his mean spirit not his intelligence.

But the record is electronically engraved. YOU may check. Perhaps there are examples to be found of me suggesting that Gerry is unintelligent, as he suggests of others, (e.g. implying I do not know which book or author I am reading and discussing). If I have ever done that, even in response to the same, I apologize.

(p.s. I have no intention of continuing the discussion. It went on far too long in the past)

Nick Lee — 25 May 2011, 19:08 · follows Lee Berman

From: "Gerry Quinn" <gerryq at indigo.ie>

But UotNS didn't exist at the time, and wasn't intended. In my view, there

is no substantive evidence that either Typhon or Ymar play any role in the Tale of the Boy Called Frog. I have said that I could imagine in principle

that Spring Wind could contain echoes of Typhon, but I don't see any real indication that he does. Mars is Spring, and Spring Wind has all the characteristics of Mars. All you and James have to go on is 'Wind' (pun unavoidable). My view is that "Spring" was simply too short and cryptic a name, too obviously fraught with symbolism. So Wolfe added the second word,

which can allude both to the life-giving rain-bearing wind of Spring and the

destructive winds of war. The first was Early Summer's intention, the second was the interpretation of Spring Wind's men. And if there is any incorporation of Typhon in the story, a pun on 'Typhoon' here is probably the extent of it., i.e. a historical general whose name sounds a bit like 'Wind'. In general the history and behaviour of Spring Wind are those of Mars, cleaving quite close to the traditions of the original story - and not

at all those of Typhon.

Certainly the tale of Mars, Romulus, and Remus, lends a lot to "The Tale of the Boy Called Frog." I don't know whether or not Andre-Druissi first came up with this bizarre derivation for "Spring Wind," but Wolfe didn't need to make it up. "Spring Wind" refers to a completely different deity. I believe that Wolfe intends this connection. He certainly alludes to it in UotNS, and there may be a connection with "The Tale of the Master and His Student," you know, *Thesis*.

Certainly these stories can have multiple meanings. I don't think they are simply there to fill the pages, and they may help in understanding the books they inhabit.

For a while, I thought Frog might refer to Severian and Fish to Baldanders. One being liminal and capable of living on land and underwater, the other eventually growing too large/evil to survive on land. It also solves the Severa problem if Baldanders is Severian's brother (or sister. . . Baldanders as transgendered: soon another), but I don't think there's enough textual evidence to make this connection. It's just a fun theory for now. Also, Borges's Baldanders has the tale of a fish. Some species of fish change their sex. So do some Frogs, but Severian is a known bisexual. Also consider Typhon. He could be Spring Wind, but in an allegorical sense he is only *trying* to be. Spring Wind has more heads, for instance. Severian is the one who succeeds in becoming an avatar of that deity.

Just some thoughts.

-Nick

James Wynn — 25 May 2011, 19:42 · in reply to Nick Lee

Now my interest is peaked. At first I thought you were thinking of Zephyrus. I think Wolfe *did* riff on that in The Book of the Long Sun. But the comment about having a lot of heads suggests you mean someone else.

On 5/25/2011 2:08 PM, Nick Lee wrote:

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Sergei SOLOVIEV — 25 May 2011, 19:42 · in reply to Lee Berman

I certainly respect your point of view but I am not convinced -

Best regards

Sergei

Lee Berman wrote:

Sergei SOLOVIEV: To me, in Wolfe's books is very important the brilliant rendering of human psychology and human existential problems. The presence of aliens, miracles, strange world serve this purpose. What you are trying to do, is to transform everything into myth about demi-gods, aliens etc and if you push it to the extreme, it will have for me no human interest.

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James Wynn — 25 May 2011, 20:17 · in reply to James Wynn

Nick Lee:

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I think he does intend a connection. It is not for nothing that the Student's end is so similar to Typhon's. He goes tumbling from his tower after Our Hero's return.

J.

Nick Lee — 26 May 2011, 05:26 · follows James Wynn

From James Wynn crushtv at gmail.com:

Now my interest is peaked. At first I thought you were thinking of Zephyrus. I think Wolfe *did* riff on that in The Book >of the Long Sun. But the comment about having a lot of heads suggests you mean someone else.

He has three. This fits nicely between Quadrifrons' four and Typhon/Pas's two. To clarify, I meant Return to the Whorl, not UotNS

-- a bit of aphasia on my part. The discussion Patera Horn has concerning the identity of the Outsider is quite illuminating. As an aside, did anyone else notice that Horn mentions a Patera Ray? Ray and Horn can be translated from the same Hebrew word, ??? (qeren). I think this is another linguistic joke/clue Wolfe is giving regarding the divinities he's referring to.

"Spring Wind" is one translation for Erikapaios (or Ericapaeus), also known as Phanes. Interestingly, "Pas" can be derived from both Erikapaios and Phanes. Phanes is the main god of the Orphic mysteries. Yes, that means he is Dionysus -- and Eros as well; he gets around. I don't think I need to remind anyone that Wolfe brings up Dionysus a lot: Peace, Sorcerer's House, RttW, etc. Borski thinks he's the Devil, but he also represents the opposite.

Phanes also manifests as the goddess Thetis (or Thesis). I think "Spring Wind," Phanes, is the Outsider. What this has to do with Wolfe's cosmology (fictional or otherwise) has already been speculated upon, in a tangential way, by others -- on this very mailing list, for example. If you like, Phanes can be another piece of the puzzle. I think he's much more. He's in both Peace and Pandora as well. That strikes me as significant.

I suppose it could all be a coincidence. We gravitate toward the interpretations that speak to us most strongly, after all. And yet if you look into the Phanic myths as I did, I think you'll find them illuminating.

--Nick

James Wynn — 26 May 2011, 06:36 · in reply to Nick Lee

Boy, Nick, did you ever come to the right counter.

Phanes is not a bad key. What is your source on him? Because the only picture I've found of him is slightly reminiscent of the Zervan (which I have argued is invoked in the character Silk). Only one head, though. Nor can I find where Ericapaeus could be translated Spring Wind. Nor where he is associated with Thetis (and this would not be surprising in a wide variety of monomyth models). How do you mean that Pas can be *derived* from both Erikapaios and Phanes?

I am also curious where you detected Dionysus in 'Peace'. Do you say Phanes is present in 'Peace' and 'Pandora' only through Dionysus? Or more directly?

J.

On 5/26/2011 12:26 AM, Nick Lee wrote:

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--Nick

David Stockhoff — 26 May 2011, 11:12 · in reply to Nick Lee

On 5/25/2011 3:08 PM, Nick Lee wrote:
Severian is a known bisexual.

How do we "know" this?

Lee Berman — 26 May 2011, 12:32 · follows David Stockhoff

Severian is a known bisexual.

David Stockhoff: How do we "know" this?

Surely we don't. Though I think there are suggestions he is a closeted bisexual. Perhaps with some pedophilic tendencies also. In context, I wonder if Nick wasn't leaning toward "hermaphrodite" or even "androgynous"..of course that sounds more like Tzadkiel or the old Autarch.

James Wynn: Boy, Nick, did you ever come to the right counter.

He did. Where has Nick been hiding?

Phanes is not a bad key. What is your source on him? Because the only picture I've found of him is slightly reminiscent of the Zervan (which I have argued is invoked in the character Silk). Only one head, though. Nor can I find where Ericapaeus could be translated Spring Wind. Nor where he is associated with Thetis (and this would not be surprising in a wide variety of monomyth models).

I found a site which answers some of James' questions. A tri-partite god rather than having three heads.

He's wedged somewhere in the post-Chaos, pre-Uranos space with some relationship to Erebus

and Nyx.

Quite angelic-looking. And..

"In addition to the name Phanes, he is also called Dionysos, Erikepaios, Eros, Metis, Protogonos, [9] Zeus, Firstborn, and Pan."

As a light-bringer, like Prometheus, like Lucifer, like Severian, he has been both deified and demonized.

Combining elements of Prometheus and Pan, I think he must also be associated with Azazel, the fallen angel

known for bringing the arts of warfare to men and beautification to women (like Inire/Cumaeen?).

(to confuse things, Dionysus and Ariadne had a son named Phanos who ended up as an Argonaut)

Here's the site: <http://www.hellenicgods.org/Phanes>

António Pedro Marques — 26 May 2011, 13:53 · in reply to Lee Berman

No dia 25/05/2011, às 19:59, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> escreveu:

I feel no need to mock you

Antonio- Should we assume it's been unintentional the dozen odd times you've seemed to try it before?

Perhaps I should have said "mock your intelligence". I am not by nature a mocking or sarcastic sort of person. My guess is that any disparaging remark made by me toward Gerry has been in regard

to his mean spirit not his intelligence.

I think this list is ripe with people who like to mock others. I don't like that. But it may be my twisted impression. I try to think it is. I don't really distinguish between different types of mockery. Twisted impression or not, I wish it went away.

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 26 May 2011, 13:57 · in reply to Lee Berman

--- On Thu, 5/26/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

From: Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com>

Subject: (urth) do the Hierogrammates *care* about the megatherians?

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Date: Thursday, May 26, 2011, 8:32 AM

Severian is a known bisexual.

David Stockhoff: How do we "know" this?

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Perhaps with some pedophilic tendencies also. In context, I wonder if Nick wasn't

leaning toward "hermaphrodite" or even "androgynous" ..of course that sounds more like

Tzadkiel or the old Autarch.

Right. I'm sure there was circlejerking and more going on the Tower among the apprentices, since they grew up in what must have been literally a prison-like environment even though they were not themselves prisoners. But that doesn't make anyone bisexual, just inured to such conditions. And I don't know of any "incidents" in Severian's account of his life.

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 26 May 2011, 14:00 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

Let's all just follow the injunction of the Nazarene, updated for email: Mock not, lest ye be mocked!

Unless someone's really begging for it, of course. ;)

--- On Thu, 5/26/11, Ant?nio Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com> wrote:
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not, I wish it went away.

James Wynn — 26 May 2011, 14:59 · in reply to Lee Berman

Nor where he is associated with Thetis
(and this would not be surprising in a wide variety of monomyth models).

After thinking about it, Nick probably means that Thetis is Phanes by way of Metis, which makes perfect sense. (Thetis is my favorite Greek god)

J.

Jeff Wilson — 26 May 2011, 17:17 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

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We're like Voltaire's demons, if you are wedded to received wisdom then of course we're mocking bastards. But if you are willing to seek enlightenment, then we're really Socratic Buddhas that labor to free your mind of its false burdens.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

António Pedro Marques — 26 May 2011, 18:28 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

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Perhaps I should have said "mock your intelligence". I am not by nature a mocking or sarcastic sort of person. My guess is that any disparaging remark made by me toward Gerry has been in regard to his mean spirit not his intelligence.

I think this list is ripe with people who like to mock others. I don't like that.

We're like Voltaire's demons, if you are wedded to received wisdom then of course we're mocking bastards. But if you are willing to seek enlightenment, then we're really Socratic Buddhas that labor to free your mind of its false burdens.

'If you find the Buddha, kill the Buddha.'

António Pedro Marques — 26 May 2011, 19:15 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

No dia 25/05/2011, às 14:31, Sergei SOLOVIEV <soloviev at irit.fr> escreveu:

To me, in Wolfe's books is very important the brilliant rendering of human psychology and human existential problems. (...) Look - the old guy looking for Cas is interesting because it is a poor old guy, living in a slum and looking for his lost wife and love all fifty years or so.

I agree and feel very strongly about this.

Jeff Wilson — 27 May 2011, 03:39 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 5/26/2011 1:28 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

No dia 26/05/2011, às 18:17, Jeff Wilson<jwilson at io.com> escreveu:

On 5/26/2011 8:53 AM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

No dia 25/05/2011, às 19:59, Lee Berman<severiansola at hotmail.com> escreveu:

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Ahem. Let us not speak of our former "radical" list member.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Nathan C. Tresch — 07 Aug 2011, 07:19 · in reply to James Wynn

On Mon, May 23, 2011 at 2:36 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

And the Red Flower was never Mowgli's banner.

I think it's worth noting that Mowgli was thought to possess the red flower by the apes, and as such it could be construed as his banner.

Per Aspera, Ad Astra

James Wynn — 08 Aug 2011, 18:50 · in reply to Nathan C. Tresch

On Mon, May 23, 2011 at 2:36 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

And the Red Flower was never Mowgli's banner.

On Aug 7, 2011, at 2:19 AM, "Nathan C. Tresch" <nathanctresch at gmail.com> wrote:

I think it's worth noting that Mowgli was thought to possess the red flower by the apes, and as such it could be construed as his banner.

Think that is worth noting. It is why some ancient translator thought Mowgli was a story about the son of "Spring Wind". I don't think we are supposed to miss that there actually IS a banner in the story with a red flower (rose).

J.