

Faterh Inire

The Urth list — 114 messages, 16 voices, 13 Oct 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6068>

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Andrew Mason — 13 Oct 2011, 13:05

Larry Miller wrote:

What jungle guide and old boatman are you referring too? ?I an think of a few examples of both.

?The jungle guide is the masked figure who leads Vodalus and party through the jungle in COTA, and occasionally disappears into the Autarch's litter to talk to him. The old boatman is Dorcas's husband.

I agree that the jungle guide is probably Inire. I don't accept most of the other identifications, because I don't think Inire is a shape-shifter (except, possibly, that he can turn himself into a tiger), so anyone Severian sees full-face can't be him (or, strictly, more than one person can't, see below). On his two most certain appearances he is either hooded or masked. He seems to belong to the same species as Barbatus and Famulimus, who are also masked.

Isangoma, as well as the others in the

jungle hut are from our time period. Robert and Marie are missionaries in South America and they are teaching Isangoma the bible.

I do think Isangoma might be Inire. The jungle hut scene is later compared to the Apu-Punchau scene. That suggests that what is happening is the recalling of a spirit from the past. We can read it like this: Robert = Apu-Punchau, the recalled spirit. Marie = the inhabitants of the stone town, part of the scene, existing in the spirit's mind. Isangoma = the Cumaeon, the magician who is recalling him.

This explains why Robert and Isangoma can see Severian and Agia, but Marie cannot.

'Isangoma' is an African name, yet he does not look African, but South American. This suggests he is not a real part of Robert's life, but is playing a part.

As to the identity with Inire, there are two clues - that the jungle guide, as Lee says, looks like Isangoma, and that Isangoma is talking about fish just after Severian has told a story about Inire and fish.

Severian is not yet Thecla at this point, so would not recognise Inire, as he would have done if he had met him later.

larry miller — 13 Oct 2011, 19:34 · in reply to Andrew Mason

The jungle guide is definetly Inire. Dorcas husband and Isangoma on the other hand Id have to disagree with you. Isangoma along with Robert and Marie are just people from our time being observed by Severian and Agia. Inire being Dorcas husband makes no sense to me but Id love to hear any thoughts you have on why you think so.

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Lee Berman — 13 Oct 2011, 22:46 · follows larry miller

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Well, I think I am willing to pursue Father Inire further than anyone else in the world (except, perhaps, Gene Wolfe and he ain't talkin').

At the risk of sounding argumentative, which I don't want to be, I'm curious about your skepticism regarding Isangoma. Sure that trio is put there for to be observed by Severian (not Agia, I think she is a pawn with different purposes). But why? And what serves to link Urth and Earth if not Father Inire? Plus we have a jungle shaman who is Inire and an "Isangoma", which means shaman, in a Jungle Hut, both with dark, metallic skin. The connection is pretty strong for me.

Dorcas' husband being Father Inire is surely a difficult leap of faith few are willing to make. I was willing because I was looking. None of the bits of evidence are compelling by themselves. It only makes sense, like a jigsaw puzzle, if you identify each piece with other pieces around it.

So, to start, when an small, old, bent man with a wry neck says Father Inire is a small, old bent man with a wry neck I have to start wondering about his identity. When Dorcas' husband says he was there when Father Inire planted the avenirs, perhaps he doesn't mean he was simply watching.

Just before the Jungle Hut, Severian tells Agia a Father Inire story which seems to suggest he has a somewhat creepy fascination with young girls (surely a Lewis Carroll reference, especially when paired with mirrors). I think the consensus for Dorcas' age when she first gave birth was about 15, so that might qualify Dorcas' husband as being similar in that regard.

Some other non-human literary characters who had a fascination with young human women were the ancient Greek and Roman gods. They were always falling in love or lust and changing their form so they could mate with some young ingenue. The offspring of such mixed-race matings were usually demi-gods or heroes. I think this analogy helps us to understand why Severian is inexplicably special in this story. Like a Greek hero he falls into fantastic adventure after adventure. He doesn't always win but nothing seems to be able to kill him and he has special powers which we eventually find out originate in him, not a blue jewel.

Anyway, similar collections of evidence can be used to identify other possible Inire iterations. I mentioned Hethor in a recent post. Fechin and Ceryx are two other oft-discussed possibilities.

David Stockhoff — 13 Oct 2011, 23:27 · in reply to Lee Berman

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larry miller — 14 Oct 2011, 00:21 · in reply to Lee Berman

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David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 01:16 · in reply to larry miller

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larry miller — 14 Oct 2011, 01:47 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Your right about when the Moffats lived. I had forgotten all about the plane I think your dead on regarding the nature of the Botanic Gardens. Father Inire built them and each garden seems to be a seperate pocket universe containing different time periods. Maybe the plane just phases in because it will one day fly over that area preserved in the garden, like interference in whatever signal is carrying that time forward to Urth? Just a thought.

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Lee Berman — 14 Oct 2011, 02:11 · follows larry miller

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Regarding the idea of another "iteration" of Earth/Urth, I'm thinking it might be good to ensure that larry is aware of this interpretation of BotNS. My own best evidence of this comes from Gene Wolfe himself, from the James Jordan interview <http://mysite.verizon.net/~vze2tmhh/wolfebj.html#urth>:

JJ: This universe that you set in Briah, or part of it--is that our universe? Or is that a universe that resurrected saints have set up in the world to come as part of the cities that they made?

GW: No. I thought of it as a long past universe. Something that we are repeating rather than something that we are....I was looking at what past universes might have been like really... And then I got into the idea of universal cycles. And decided that I would show that this might be a past cycle. Some physicists at least think that the Big Bang is eventually going to be followed by a Big Gnab in which the whole universe coalesces again which will be followed by another Big Bang which is sort of like a succession of universe

another crucially (for me) key quote from that interview is:

JJ: Which is another way of saying, do we have fallen angels here or some type of power that really was operative in the world before the kingdom of God?

GW: That is my personal belief. I think that the gods of paganism were real. But what I tried to do was to write about that pagan world as the pagans themselves wrote about it. If we read modern historians we are reading a very rationalistic viewpoint of this which says that all of these people were absolutely wasting their time by building temples to Ares or Apollo or you name it. And by offering sacrifices in worship and all that it was nothing there. Nothing at all there

and that whether it is true or not that certainly is not the way the people who were doing it felt. They were convinced that there was something there and they had all sorts of legends and so forth about the appearances of the god and in fact there is one place in the Acts where Paul and another one of the apostles are mistaken for Zeus and Mercury. Zeus and Hermes, we are mixing the Latin and the Greek which is what I was trying to get away from. They 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.

Lee Berman — 14 Oct 2011, 02:23 · follows Lee Berman

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I have overstated the congruence a bit but Severian describes the old boatman as: "bowed and shrunken by age..until he could hardly have weighed more than a boy of ten."

The old boatman's description of Father Inire is: "Just a little man is he, with a wry neck and bow legs"

He mentions that to keep manatees out of the lake, "Father Inire had the gardeners plant the averts. I was here and saw it".

I don't think any first time reader would see those lines halfway through the first book of this series and conclude that the old boatman was Father Inire. But after multiple readings of the series and coming to the conclusion that we are supposed to look for disguised appearances of Father Inire, I still find the old boatman to be a prime candidate.

larry miller — 14 Oct 2011, 10:59 · in reply to Lee Berman

yeah OK I can see the prospect of Inire going back seeking knowledge from the past. Maybe he wished to learn all he could about humanity's religious beliefs to help him propagate the New Suns legend in the far future? I am aware of Urth being in a previous universe than our own but it was always my understanding that the Urth iteration and ours were still very similar (the Apollo landing picture, or the Antechambers references to Alice in Wonderland for example).

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Sergei SOLOVIEV — 14 Oct 2011, 11:48 · in reply to larry miller

If you got interested in the links between Urth and our world - please, answer this: how the Chrasomological writings were composed? Yes, we know "within the book" that Typhon/Pas ordered some scholars to do it. But I mean other question - what message wants GW to pass to us, regarding their content?

There are several quotations from the books of our time. Actually, all passages that are explicitly given are such quotations.

Andrew Bollen, Josh Geller and James Wynn discussed long ago the quotation from the "Hamlet's Mill" by Giorgio di Santillana and Hertha von Dechend.

"A simple way would be to admit that myth is neither irresponsible = fantasy, nor the object of weighty psychology, or any such thing. It is = wholly other, and requires to be looked at with open eyes." (Horn/Silk reads it in the Grand Manteion.)

Another quotation is from Pope's translation from Odyssey. (Horn/Silk reads to Olivine, half-finished daughter of Maytera Marble.) Then it was also (slightly modified) quotation from Sapho in the end of the Horn/Silk story.

My point is that GW didn't just use beautiful poetry, but that he wanted us to recognize them as quotations, and that brings a message.

Best to all -

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On 10/13/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

larry miller: Dont worry about sounding argumentative, this is a discussion group after all.

okay! though there have been times in the past where the discussion got nasty and

even personally disrespectful to some contributors. It's been my personal goal to

try to steer away from that trend.

David Stockhoff: For one thing, it has been noted that the Moffats lived before air travel, yet there is a plane. This and other twists (more than I can now recall) make the scene more and less than it appears. Is the scene from Urth's past? Our "present"? Or another "iteration" of Earth/Urth?

Or is it a scene of spirits called up by Inire, who built the Gardens and therefore has at least some control over time?

I agree with David. He is good at distilling the essential points from years of

previous discussion. I would only add that we might all agree that if nothing

else, Father Inire is a scholar, interested in collecting knowledge from other

places and times. I'm sure this was Wolfe's intention for having him visit Africa and

people of earth from roughly our own time frame (if Isangoma is Inire).

Regarding the idea of another "iteration" of Earth/Urth, I'm thinking it

might be good

to ensure that Larry is aware of this interpretation of BotNS. My own best evidence of

this comes from Gene Wolfe himself, from the James Jordan interview

<http://mysite.verizon.net/~vze2tmhh/wolfebj.html#urth>:

JJ: This universe that you set in Briah, or part of it--is that our universe? Or is that

a universe that resurrected saints have set up in the world to come as part of the cities

that they made?

GW: No. I thought of it as a long past universe. Something that we are repeating rather than

something that we are....I was looking at what past universes might have been like really...

And then I got into the idea of universal cycles. And decided that I would show that this might

be a past cycle. Some physicists at least think that the Big Bang is eventually going to be

followed by a Big Gnap in which the whole universe coalesces again which will be followed by

another Big Bang which is sort of like a succession of universe

another crucially (for me) key quote from that interview is:

JJ: Which is another way of saying, do we have fallen angels here or some type of power that

really was operative in the world before the kingdom of God?

GW: That is my personal belief. I think that the gods of paganism were real. But what I tried

to do was to write about that pagan world as the pagans themselves wrote about it. If we read

modern historians we are reading a very rationalistic viewpoint of this which says that all of

these people were absolutely wasting their time by building temples to Ares or Apollo or you name

it. And by offering sacrifices in worship and all that it was nothing there. Nothing at all there

and that whether it is true or not that certainly is not the way the people who were doing it felt.

They were convinced that there was something there and they had all sorts of legends and so forth

about the appearances of the god and in fact there is one place in the Acts where Paul and another

one of the apostles are mistaken for Zeus and Mercury. Zeus and Hermes, we are mixing the Latin and

the Greek which is what I was trying to get away from. They 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.

Lee Berman — 14 Oct 2011, 12:51 · follows Sergei SOLOVIEV

Sergei Soloviev: If you got interested in the links between Urth and our world - please, answer this: how the Chasmological writings were composed?

Yes, we know "within the book" that Typhon/Pas ordered some scholars to do it. But I mean other question - what message wants GW to pass to us, regarding their content?

I think this piggybacks to themes addressed with Larry Miller in the "Father Inire" thread.

Wolfe has said he wrote BotNS with the idea of a series of universes created by a sequence of Big Bang/Grand Gnabs (sadly, the recent Nobel prize in Physics went to guys who disproved this model).

My own mental model of this string of universes is in an ascending spiral (thus the Hiero's preference for that shape). Thus it takes a long "time" to travel linearly from one universe to the next. But there exists the possibility of short cuts between a universe and the ones just above or below on the spiral. Father Inire, Jonas and Dr. Talos and others have access to one of these short cuts and thus access to Earth legends and the means to bring them to Urth.

I think Wolfe's purpose to this literary device is to offer an explanation for the origin of our own myths. Presumably Wolfe believes we live in a Judeo-Christian universe, created and eternally governed by that God. So how could He have created such competitors and monsters such as Dionysus and Typhon and vampires etc.

If our myths and legends can leak into Severian's universe then perhaps the gods and horrors of

a gnostic universe can leak into ours. It is one way to justify Wolfe's stated belief that pagan gods are real.

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 13:25 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

From: Sergei SOLOVIEV

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Yes, we know "within the book" that Typhon/Pas ordered some scholars to do it.
But I mean other question - what message wants GW to pass to us, regarding their content?

There are several quotations from the books of our time. Actually, all passages that are explicitly given are such quotations.

Didn't Wolfe himself say somewhere that Typhon got his servants to make up a book of philosophy from eclectic sources, to be the Word of Pas? Or was that someone else? Whatever about "cycles", Wolfe's Urth is much the same as our Earth, and it's prehistory at least (the era of the Dawn Men, extending up to the colonisation of the inner Solar System) appears to be nearly identical. Not just the Chrasomological Writings but various objects and events in BotNS testify to this.
- Gerry Quinn

larry miller — 14 Oct 2011, 14:46 · in reply to Lee Berman

I quite like your idea of a spiral string of universes. Surely there exists shortcuts or else Severians manuscripts would never of ended up in Wolfes hands!

On 10/14/11, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

Sergei Soloviev: If you got interested in the links between Urth and our world - please, answer this: how the Chrasomological writings were composed?
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I think this piggybacks to themes addressed with larry miller in the "Faterh Inire" thread.

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If our myths and legends can leak into Severian's universe then perhaps the gods and horrors of a gnostic universe can leak into ours. It is one way to justify Wolfe's stated belief that pagan gods are real.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 14:54 · in reply to larry miller

On 10/14/2011 6:59 AM, larry miller wrote:
yeah OK I can see the prospect of Inire going back seeking knowledge from the past. Maybe he wished to learn all he could about humanity's religious beliefs to help him propagate the New Sun's legend in the far future? I am aware of Urth being in a previous universe than our own but it was always my understanding that the Urth iteration and ours were still very similar (the Apollo landing picture, or the Antechambers references to Alice in Wonderland for example).

Well, if it's an iteration, it's going to be similar. The iterations get "better."

It's complicated by the fact that (AFAICT) Severian is in the future of that iteration which is in our past. His universe is older than ours but has not yet been born. Thus the translator's note about excavating the deep future.

Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 15:31 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

A really really quick point I wanted to make. The idea that everything in Severian's manuscript happened before our present time always felt like a slight retconning in that Jordan interview to avoid offending a protestant but spiritually inclined interviewer.

Wolfe, while raised a somewhat lax Protestant, converted to Catholicism late and seemed to be a bit more in tune with the general orthodox "laxity" of the Genesis story and especially its first 11 chapters (or indeed, all bible stories) in which the inspired truth doesn't have to be literally true but is true symbolically or as parable that simple man can grasp (John Paul II said evolution might be "more than theory", which is actually more than a scientist would probably say). Having said that, Gene is still spiritually inclined and, in my opinion, appreciates that inclination in his readers.

For example, Jordan says something about God promising to never visit another flood on mankind. Gene says, that's a previous iteration, because he knows he has a cyclic reality and it seems a way out of the trap without saying, "well, the first 11 chapters of Genesis are parables, James. Like the good samaritan: he's true without ever having actually existed, a figment of Jesus' imagination"

When Severian casts his manuscript into the rift in urth of the New Sun, that manuscript could have ended up ANYWHEN, for that ship sails through time. Yes, Gene intended his creation to be cyclical, but I don't think he necessarily intended that iteration to be necessarily in the past until James Jordan called the truth of the Covenant down on him, at which point Gene created a very very simple solution already written into his story. That's my theory anyway. It could have been in the past or the future, but it wasn't placed in the past until the covenant came up by a

more literally inclined Protestant reader, who would vest more authority in the Bible rather than the Catechism.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 16:00 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On 10/14/2011 11:31 AM, Marc Aramini wrote:

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I think the fact that the Translator refers to the future supports this flexibility.

I think there are two simultaneous, opposite, and complementary approaches to successfully imagining and completing a story cycle like the Sun series. (1) Work out critical stuff that your narrators experience firsthand or that characters discuss a lot in GREAT detail. (2) Bullshit the rest as you go.

But make sure you identify separate "piles" of ideas that are compatible. For example, in the "super-Internet" pile goes: a society run by thinking machines; a society of mind-controlled humans run by machines; a society of mind-controlled humans run by humans; a society of propaganda-controlled humans; a society of humans who dream together; a society of humans who This way, vague references such things can change without contradicting one another too much.

Jerry Friedman — 14 Oct 2011, 16:05 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

From: Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com>

From: Sergei SOLOVIEV

?> If you got interested in the links between Urth and our world - please, answer this: how the Chrasmmological writings were composed?

Yes, we know "within the book" that Typhon/Pas ordered some scholars to do it.

But I mean other question - what message wants GW to pass to us, regarding their content?

There are several quotations from the books of our time. Actually, all passages that are explicitly given are such quotations.

Didn't? Wolfe himself say somewhere that Typhon got his servants to make up a book of philosophy from eclectic sources, to be the Word of Pas? Or was that someone else?

But this sort of thing is blurred by the quotations in the Atrium of Time. The Latin doesn't match Valeria's translations, so Wolfe has drawn attention to his fictitious translation by turning quotations in the original dead language into somewhat similar but perhaps recognizable-to-us Latin tags.

Maybe the Chrasomological Writings are the same thing, and we're supposed to imagine that Wolfe the translator has turned quotations from Briah into somewhat similar quotations from our literature.

If all the passages from the Chrasomological Writings really are quotations, that would corroborate this idea, as it would be remarkable for the chrasomologists to have limited themselves to sources written before the late 20th century.

Whatever about "cycles", Wolfe's Urth is much the same as our Earth, and it's prehistory at least (the era of the Dawn Men, extending up to the colonisation of the inner

Solar System) appears to be nearly identical.

Presumably except for Jesus.

Not just the Chrasomological Writings but various objects and events in BotNS testify to this.

But how far would Wolfe go in familiarizing things from Urth's past? Could he have changed the names of their saints to the names of ours? Could he have changed Severian's description of the "Apollo" painting so we would recognize it? (Maybe not.)

Jerry Friedman

Jeff Wilson — 14 Oct 2011, 16:14 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/14/2011 9:54 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/14/2011 6:59 AM, larry miller wrote:

yeah OK I can see the prospect of Inire going back seeking knowledge from the past. Maybe he wished to learn all he could about humanity's religious beliefs to help him propagate the New Suns legend in the far future? I am aware of Urth being in a previous universe than our own but it was always my understanding that the Urth iteration and ours were still very similar (the Apollo landing picture, or the Antechambers references to Alice in Wonderland for example).

Well, if it's an iteration, it's going to be similar. The iterations get "better."

It's complicated by the fact that (AFAICT) Severian is in the future of that iteration which is in our past. His universe is older than ours but has not yet been born. Thus the translator's note about excavating the deep future.

We can suppose that the translator "G.W." believes it is from our absolute future due to the futuristic details of the ms and the anachronistic artifacts associated with it. He believes he has been shown buildings in our time that will endure into this future era, but this is all circumstantial.

My money is still on the authorial-afterthought hypothesis, where Wolfe writes about this future age, then belatedly realizes Severian being in the absolute as well as relative future has blasphemous implications and retroactively (heh) places Sev's story in a previous incarnation to avoid making no-Jesus Urth an improvement over with-Jesus Earth or making G-d's promise to Noah a lie.

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

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 16:24 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/14/2011 12:14 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/14/2011 9:54 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/14/2011 6:59 AM, larry miller wrote:

yeah OK I can see the prospect of Inire going back seeking knowledge from the past. Maybe he wished to learn all he could about humanity's religious beliefs to help him propagate the New Suns legend in the far future? I am aware of Urth being in a previous universe than our own but it was always my understanding that the Urth iteration and ours were still very similar (the Apollo landing picture, or the Antechambers references to Alice in Wonderland for example).

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I'd think he would have thought of that earlier, being a smart guy, but it's all good.

Gerry Quinn — 14 Oct 2011, 16:27 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

From: Jerry Friedman

From: Gerry Quinn gerry at bindweed.com

If all the passages from the Chrasomological Writings really are quotations, that would corroborate this idea, as it would be remarkable for the chrasomologists to have limited themselves to sources written before the

late 20th century.

We have only seen a small portion of the Writings.

Whatever about "cycles", Wolfe's Urth is much the same as our Earth, and it's prehistory at least (the era of the Dawn Men, extending up to the colonisation of the inner Solar System) appears to be nearly identical.

Presumably except for Jesus.

Jesus existed in the universe of Urth — Silk has a vision of him entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Not just the Chrasmmological Writings but various objects and events in BotNS testify to this.

But how far would Wolfe go in familiarizing things from Urth's past? Could he have changed the names of their saints to the names of ours? Could he have changed Severian's description of the "Apollo" painting so we would recognize it?

Who knows? He may even have selected or substituted the particular Chrasmmological Writings recorded by Horn, so that prehistoric readers will correctly interpret their nature and origin.

- Gerry Quinn

Lee Berman — 14 Oct 2011, 16:50 · follows Gerry Quinn

Marc Aramini: A really really quick point I wanted to make. The idea that everything in Severian's manuscript happened before our present time always felt like a slight retconning in that Jordan interview to avoid offending a protestant but spiritually inclined interviewer.

I absolutely agree that this is an important aspect of interpreting the James Jordan interview. Wolfe seems to tread more carefully and politely with him than almost any other interviewer I've seen

James is a pretty sensitive guy when it comes to religion. In a discussion with him in here a number of years back he got rather upset with the idea that the Nephilim mentioned in Genesis, and in Dr. Talos' play, might be the product of the mating of fallen angels and humans (though in the play the demon Jahi seems to be trying to accomplish just that).

I think in his effort to be polite and considerate of James, Wolfe forgets to be as guarded as he usually is and lets quite a few things slip, making this perhaps the most revealing Wolfe interview ever. (Wolfe is also quite respectful to his peer, Larry McCafferey, which is the interview where he spills the beans about 5HoC, Dr. Marsch and VRT).

I'm not sure if the politeness to JJ extends so far as to lead to an amendment of his universal philosophies but I agree with Marc that the possibility should at least be considered.

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 14 Oct 2011, 16:54 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Did Gene Wolfe ever mention the book called "The circus of Dr. Lao"? It's a curious book, first published in 1935 by Charles G. Finney. I recently got a second edition - University of Nebraska Press, 2002. There is curiously many parallels with GW writings.

The story goes that to a small town, Abalone in Arizona, comes (in 1930-es) the circus of Dr. Lao. Then the development goes along surrealistic/magic lines, but the style sounds very modern.

Direct parallels:

1) there is a catalogue of characters, like in the BotLS and BotSS books - in somewhat similar style "Dr. Lao: A Chinese Mr. Etaoin: A corrector of errors Appolonius of Tyana: A legend ... Teddy Roosevelt: An American President ... "

2) there is a Hound of the Hedges - it is a green dog who uses photosynthesis, like the Green Man in the BotNS

3) There is a Gadarene Swine (one of the swine from the Bible, Jesus sent devils into it) like in the short story about the Pig in Chains by GW.

4) There is a She-werevolf.

5) A Mermaid

6) A lot of dialogs (GW mentions that he loves dialogs) in particular, between human and non-human personages - Mr. Etaoin speaks at length with the Sea Serpent. ...

Best

Sergei Soloviev

Gwern Branwen — 14 Oct 2011, 17:03 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

On Fri, Oct 14, 2011 at 12:54 PM, Sergei SOLOVIEV <soloviev at irit.fr> wrote:
Did Gene Wolfe ever mention the book called "The circus of Dr. Lao"? It's a curious
book, first published in 1935 by Charles G. Finney. I recently got a second
edition -
University of Nebraska Press, 2002. There is curiously many parallels with
GW writings.

It has certainly come up many times on this list, mostly in _An Evil
Guest_ context IIRC: <https://encrypted.google.com/search?q=%22Circus%20of%20Dr%2E%20Lao%22%20site%3Aurth%2Enet>

However, I don't know that Wolfe himself has ever mentioned it. (A quick grep through my incomplete collection of text files doesn't turn up anything.)

gwern
<http://www.gwern.net>

Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 18:26 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

--- On Fri, 10/14/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

Jesus existed in the universe of Urth — Silk has a vision of him entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Yes, absolutely. This is why i think when Jordan brings up the old covenant that promises not to bring another flood, Wolfe, thinks, "oh, yeah, shoot, the old covenant .. (always concerned with Jesus' new covenant and almost completely overturning all the old stuff) uh ... different universal cycles, James."

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 18:34 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

On 10/14/2011 12:54 PM, Sergei SOLOVIEV wrote:
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5) A Mermaid

6) A lot of dialogs (GW mentions that he loves dialogs) in particular,
between human and

non-human personnages - Mr. Etaoin speaks at lenght with the Sea Serpent.

...

Nice! I must read this book.

Etaoin Shrdlu, btw, was an old typesetter's joke.

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

Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 18:41 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

It's infinitely clear in New Sun that the Conciliator is a syncretic blend of a historical Christ and the legendary possibilities of his return, after-Christ, but it only becomes obvious in Urth how that syncretism comes about (Robert and Maria are missionaries, Silk sees Jesus, etc. etc., Jesus exists in the Solar Cycle, and Severian is not him though he may reenact portions of the Christian passion (as does Tzadkiel, for that matter). Sev's whole trial indicates that it is imitation and substitution at work in the salvation effort, he doesn't even bear the sacrificial burden there.

Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 18:46 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

One more key point. While I think the solar cycle has Jesus, it's pretty clear that Wolfe wanted to play with a medieval world without Christianity dominating in the Wizard Knight - maybe he thought about the implications of such a world and I feel for sure that is part of his motivation in exploring Mythgarthr etc.

Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 18:48 · in reply to Sergei SOLOVIEV

--- On Fri, 10/14/11, Sergei SOLOVIEV <soloviev at irit.fr> wrote:

From: Sergei SOLOVIEV <soloviev at irit.fr>

Subject: (urth) the circus of Dr. Lao

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

Date: Friday, October 14, 2011, 9:54 AM

Did Gene Wolfe ever mention the book called "The circus of Dr. Lao"? It's a curious book, first published in 1935 by Charles G. Finney. I recently got a second edition - University of Nebraska Press, 2002. There is curiously many parallels with GW writings.

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6) A lot of dialogs (GW mentions that he loves dialogs) in particular, between human and non-human personages - Mr. Etain speaks at length with the Sea Serpent.

...

Best

Sergei Soloviev

Most assuredly. Its where he got Woldercon for An Evil Guest. The sacrifice at the end may be more or less applicable to the sacrifice at the end of Wolfe's novel.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 18:52 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On 10/14/2011 2:46 PM, Marc Aramini wrote:

One more key point. While I think the solar cycle has Jesus, it's pretty clear that Wolfe wanted to play with a medieval world without Christianity dominating in the Wizard Knight - maybe he thought about the implications of such a world and I feel for sure that is part of his motivation in exploring Mythgarthr etc.

I agree. One "big question" that such a story would answer is: can there be ethics without God (including Christ as proof of God's yadda yadda)?

Since Wolfe is not a Protestant, his answer is not necessarily "no." Because he loves myth and sees it as a genuine answer to real problems, his answer is "probably." Does the book prove it? Hard to say.

Antonin Scriabin — 14 Oct 2011, 19:09 · in reply to Marc Aramini

When does Silk see Jesus? I vaguely remember something like that; perhaps in his meditations on the Outsider he comes to such a conclusion?

The Severian-as-a-type-of-Christ stuff isn't as obvious to me. Severian is not divine, and not in charge; he gives the appearance of both of these, however, only because as the Conciliator he is wrenched forward and backward in time by entities more powerful than him. He is used as a pawn to usher in the New Sun at the expense of (presumably) most of the life on Urth, but this seems a decidedly un-Christlike salvation to me. There are superficial similarities between Christ and Severian (male, human yet more than human, prophesied, etc.) but there differences enough that I see treating Severian as allegorical to Christ as a desservice to the complexity of his character, and the story. Rather, Severian seems a sort of perversion of what we consider Christ-like and heroic; Severian is decidedly flawed, mundane, and unaware of himself in time, his role, and his powers for the majority of the story. When he becomes an amalgamation of the past Autarchs and Thecla, he doesn't even retain a singular identity anymore; this is also very unlike Christ.

On Fri, Oct 14, 2011 at 2:41 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com> wrote:

It's infinitely clear in New Sun that the Conciliator is a syncretic blend of a historical Christ and the legendary possibilities of his return, after-Christ, but it only becomes obvious in Urth how that syncretism comes about (robert and maria are missionaries, Silk sees Jesus, etc. etc., Jesus exists in the Solar Cycle, and Severian is not him though he may reenact portions of the Christian passion (as does Tzadkiel, for that matter). Sev's whole trial indicates that it is imitation and substitution at work in the salvation effort, he doesn't even bear the sacrificial burden there.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 19:11 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Bingo. That's why he's a Christ figure.

On 10/14/2011 3:09 PM, Antonin Scriabin wrote:

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Antonin Scriabin — 14 Oct 2011, 19:15 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Christ was not flawed, divine, aware of his mission, his role, and quite cognizant of his powers ... these seem like the opposite of Severian?

On Fri, Oct 14, 2011 at 3:11 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
Bingo. That's why he's a Christ figure.

On 10/14/2011 3:09 PM, Antonin Scriabin wrote:

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David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 19:21 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Yes. That's why Severian is not Christ.

You'll find a fuller discussion (several of them) in the archives.

On 10/14/2011 3:15 PM, Antonin Scriabin wrote:

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Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 19:24 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

--- On Fri, 10/14/11, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegardian at gmail.com> wrote:

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The Severian-as-a-type-of-Christ stuff isn't as obvious to me. Severian is not divine, and not in charge; he gives the appearance of both of these, however, only because as the Conciliator he is wrenched forward and backward in time by entities more powerful than him. He is used as a pawn to usher in the New Sun at the expense of (presumably) most of the life on Urth, but this seems a decidedly un-Christlike salvation to me. There are superficial similarities between Christ and Severian (male, human yet more than human, prophesied, etc.) but there differences enough that I see treating Severian as allegorical to Christ as a desservice to the complexity of his character, and the story. Rather, Severian seems a sort of perversion of what we consider Christ-like and heroic; Severian is decidedly flawed, mundane, and unaware of himself in time, his role, and his powers for the majority of the story. When he becomes an amalgamation of the past Autarchs and Thecla, he doesn't even retain a singular identity anymore; this is also very unlike Christ.

On Fri, Oct 14, 2011 at 2:41 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com> wrote:

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Also, everybody is named after saints!?!clearly an attempt at a religious manuscript.

Antonin Scriabin — 14 Oct 2011, 19:25 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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Urth Mailing List

Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 19:30 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

--- On Fri, 10/14/11, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegardian at gmail.com> wrote:

From: Antonin Scriabin <kierkegardian at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Urth - Earth links
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Date: Friday, October 14, 2011, 12:25 PM

I will look for them; I don't see enough to consider Severian to be a parallel of Christ without really bending the definition / nature of Christ. I guess this will eventually turn into a theological dispute as to the nature of the biblical Christ!

It's because there was really only one person who could reconcile the divine and the human in such a fashion that his sacrifice would pay for the sins of the world: the (re)conciliator, by the very title he is Christ.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 19:31 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

It may help to think of Sev as the kind of Christ who might appear to save the people of a really, really, bad, dark universe utterly cut off from its creator.

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Antonin Scriabin — 14 Oct 2011, 19:38 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 19:40 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

--- On Fri, 10/14/11, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegardian at gmail.com> wrote:

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Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 19:42 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

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Jerry Friedman — 14 Oct 2011, 19:43 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

From: Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com>

From: Jerry Friedman

From: Gerry Quinn gerry at bindweed.com

If all the passages from the Chrasmmological Writings really are quotations, that would corroborate this idea, as it would be remarkable for the chrasmmologists to have limited themselves to sources written before the ? late 20th century.

We have only seen a small portion of the Writings.

Sorry, I meant "all the passages we've seen".

It would also be remarkable for the ones that come up in the story to be limited to those

sources.

Whatever about "cycles", Wolfe's Urth is much the same as our Earth, and it's prehistory at least (the era of the Dawn Men, extending up to the colonisation of the inner Solar System) appears to be nearly identical.

Presumably except for Jesus.

Jesus existed in the universe of Urth — Silk has a vision of him entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

I've always seen that as a trans-universal vision, delivered by the Outsider, of the most important Person in all universes (as Wolfe may see it).

People have been mentioning clues that Jesus existed in Briah. I think that at least by the time Wolfe got to the Long Sun, those are resemblances with the same cause as the echo between Baldanders's story and Frankenstein's (and the possibly different story that Dr. Talos has in mind). In other words, the Conciliator and other aspects of Briah "prefigure" Jesus, much like various sacrificed and resurrected pagan gods according to at least some Catholics. Catholics seem to accept that this sort of causation can work backward in time.

I have a great deal of trouble believing that Wolfe wanted to imagine Incarnations in different universe or a world Jesus had been forgotten and the Roman Catholic Church had disappeared. But I know of no evidence on this point.

On the other hand, I agree with those who suspect that he hadn't come up with the past-universe idea when he wrote that bit about buildings surviving so many centuries of futurity, and that there was some retconning, not necessarily as late as the Jordan interview.

On the gripping hand, one possible interpretation of the discrepancies in the Jungle Hut scene is that Wolfe was already thinking in /Shadow/ that Severian's universe's history that was similar to ours but not the same.

Not just the Chrasmmological Writings but various objects and events in BotNS testify to this.

But how far would Wolfe go in familiarizing things from Urth's past? Could he have changed the names of their saints to the names of ours? Could he have ? changed Severian's description of the "Apollo" painting so we would recognize it?

Who knows? He may even have selected or substituted the particular Chrasmmological Writings recorded by Horn, so that prehistoric readers will correctly interpret their nature and origin.

Indeed.

Jerry Friedman

Matthew Weber — 14 Oct 2011, 19:44 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On Fri, Oct 14, 2011 at 12:40 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com> wrote:

--- On *Fri, 10/14/11, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegaardian at gmail.com>* wrote:

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The ritual of the Torturers in which Catherine is beheaded is a reference to the martyrdom of St Catherine of Alexandria. Sentenced to be broken on the wheel, she was beheaded when the wheel fell apart at her touch. So it's pretty clearly referencing the early Christian tradition, although at the time BotNS takes place it could be a custom whose purpose and original meaning has been forgotten.

Matt +

All things are the same--familiar in enterprise, momentary in endurance, coarse in substance. All things now are as they were in the day of those whom we have buried.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121-180), Meditations, IX, 14

Antonin Scriabin — 14 Oct 2011, 19:46 · in reply to Marc Aramini

"So it didn't seem like a far future religious manuscript to you, with the new sun coming to save the earth from the death of the sun at the end of mankind?"

There were definitely religious themes towards the beginning, but that eventually seemed to be because the characters didn't have all the facts about who the Conciliator was. As Severian learns and experiences more, the divine element becomes less prominent. There are fantastic, but not divine, reasons for the way things are, and will be. The Conciliator seems to be a religious figure of divine origin before it is discovered that he was a time-traveling pawn of inter-dimensional beings who have a (sort of) unexplained interest in one small planet, out of many. That, together with the fact that it is written as a memoir from a not altogether trustworthy or nice person made it seem very unlike a religious manuscript.

On Fri, Oct 14, 2011 at 3:40 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com> wrote:

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Antonin Scriabin — 14 Oct 2011, 19:47 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Halos date back to throughout the Greek heroic tales; they is not distinctly Christian, though it might have been old or modified Christian art in the New Sun.

On Fri, Oct 14, 2011 at 3:42 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com> wrote:

--- On *Fri, 10/14/11, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegaardian at gmail.com>* wrote:

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Andrew Mason — 14 Oct 2011, 19:54 · follows Antonin Scriabin

When does Silk see Jesus? "I vaguely remember something like that; perhaps in his meditations on the Outsider he comes to such a conclusion"

The clearest evidence is the statement that in one of his enlightenments he saw a man riding through a city where people were waving fronds. The man on the scaffold, and the child lying in straw, which he sees may well be Jesus as well, but that's less certain.

The Severian-as-a-type-of-Christ stuff isn't as obvious to me. ?Severian is not divine, and not in charge; he gives the appearance of both of these, however, only because as the Conciliator he is wrenched forward and backward in time by entities more powerful than him. ?He is used as a pawn to usher in the New Sun at the expense of (presumably) most of the life on Urth, but this seems a decidedly un-Christlike salvation to me. ?There are superficial similarities between Christ and Severian (male, human yet more than human,

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There are some rather clear correspondences between Severian and Christ; for instance he turns water into wine, and one of his deaths and resurrections - a death which, unlike most of the others, is torturous - is accompanied by an earthquake.

On the more general question of whether he's a Christ figure, it depends just what you mean by the term. In a literary sense I would say that he is, because what he does parallels what Christ does in some way, but that is certainly compatible with his being flawed. (Harry Potter, for instance, is a Christ figure in that sense. There's no doubt he's flawed, though.) And Wolfe preferred to call Severian a Christian figure, presumably to avoid any suggestion that he should be seen as perfect.

Wolfe has also called Severian a form of the Outsider. Forms of the Outsider are most clearly explained in OBW; it's made clear there that you can _become_ a form of the Outsider - Kypris has done so, and Thelxipeia may do so in the future. So presumably these are not just forms which the Outsider adopts; they are people in their own right, who have become in some way attuned to the Outsider, through whom he has spoken and acted. I suspect Silk himself may be another. Again, this cannot mean that they are perfect - Kypris is not. So I think this means we should see what Severian does in a positive light and as a manifestation of God's will, but not deny his flaws.

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 19:58 · in reply to Andrew Mason

On 10/14/2011 3:54 PM, Andrew Mason wrote:

When does Silk see Jesus? I vaguely remember something like that; perhaps in his meditations on the Outsider he comes to such a conclusion?

The clearest evidence is the statement that in one of his enlightenments he saw a man riding through a city where people were waving fronds. The man on the scaffold, and the child lying in straw, which he sees may well be Jesus as well, but that's less certain.

To me, that is all one thing, in three parts.

Antonin Scriabin — 14 Oct 2011, 19:59 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Ah, thank you. I remember that part of Long Sun now. In reading these books, it seemed more that the Outsider was reminiscent of Christ (the Outsider being the "real" god in the midst of a number of fake ones) than Severian.

I guess I am thrown off by the term "Christ figure" because it seems to be overly allegorical. The savior hero archetype existed before the historical Christ; I guess I just think in those terms instead.

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The Severian-as-a-type-of-Christ stuff isn't as obvious to me. Severian is not divine, and not in charge; he gives the appearance of both of these, however, only because as the Conciliator he is wrenched forward and backward in time by entities more powerful than him. He is used as a pawn to usher in the New Sun at the expense of (presumably) most of the life on Urth, but this seems a decidedly un-Christlike salvation to me. There are superficial similarities between Christ and Severian (male, human yet more than human, prophesied, etc.) but there differences enough that I see treating Severian as allegorical to Christ as a desservice to the complexity of his character, and the story. Rather, Severian seems a sort of perversion of what we consider Christ-like and heroic; Severian is decidedly flawed, mundane, and unaware of himself in time, his role, and his powers for the majority of the story. When he becomes an amalgamation of the past Autarchs and Thecla, he doesn't even retain a singular identity anymore; this is also very unlike Christ.

There are some rather clear correspondences between Severian and Christ; for instance he turns water into wine, and one of his deaths and resurrections - a death which, unlike most of the others, is torturous - is accompanied by an earthquake.

On the more general question of whether he's a Christ figure, it depends just what you mean by the term. In a literary sense I would say that he is, because what he does parallels what Christ does in some way, but that is certainly compatible with his being flawed. (Harry Potter, for instance, is a Christ figure in that sense. There's no doubt he's flawed, though.) And Wolfe preferred to call Severian a Christian figure, presumably to avoid any suggestion that he should be seen as perfect.

Wolfe has also called Severian a form of the Outsider. Forms of the Outsider are most clearly explained in OBW; it's made clear there that you can _become_ a form of the Outsider - Kypris has done so, and Thelxipeia may do so in the future. So presumably these are not just forms which the Outsider adopts; they are people in their own right, who have become in some way attuned to the Outsider, through whom he has spoken and acted. I suspect Silk himself may be another. Again, this cannot mean that they are perfect - Kypris is not. So I think this means we should see what Severian does in a positive light and as a manifestation of God's will, but not deny his flaws.

Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 20:08 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

--- On Fri, 10/14/11, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegaurdian at gmail.com> wrote:

From: Antonin Scriabin <kierkegaurdian at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Urth-Earth links

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

Date: Friday, October 14, 2011, 12:59 PM

Ah, thank you. I remember that part of Long Sun now. In reading these books, it seemed more that the Outsider was reminiscent of Christ (the Outsider being the "real" god in the midst of a number of fake ones) than Severian.

I guess I am thrown off by the term "Christ figure" because it seems to be overly allegorical. The savior hero archetype existed before the historical Christ; I guess I just think in those terms instead.

But there is every ridiculous allegorical parallels. At one point, he is tempted by the satan figure with almost identical verbiage. Bow before me and all this will be yours.. are you hungry? I got some food for you too. The temptation of Christ in the wilderness being replayed verbatim, healing the sick, resurrecting the dead, hastening an event that almost ends the world, overtly overtly Christ like.

How WOULD you make a Christ figure if ripping off conversations between Christ and the Devil directly from the bible doesn't do it? (except Sev kills the devil there, but the words are the same. but Christ comes back with a SWORD, remember the old prophesy?)

Andrew Mason — 14 Oct 2011, 20:18 · follows Marc Aramini

Lee Berman wrote:

James is a pretty sensitive guy when it comes to religion. In a discussion with him in here a number of years back he got rather upset with the idea that the Nephilim mentioned in Genesis, and in Dr. Talos'

play, might be the product of the mating of fallen angels and humans (though in the play the demon Jahi seems to be trying to accomplish just that).

Wolfe has actually explained (in COTO) what he thinks the Nephilim were; they were the product of matings between humans and non-rational hominids, who, being innocent, could be called 'sons of God'. So I don't think the use of 'Nephilim' is evidence of human/angel mating, whatever he may otherwise think of it.

(It's interesting that he assumes the existence of evolution and long time-periods, and yet takes it that the Nephilim passage is a report of a real event; make of that what you will.)

David Stockhoff — 14 Oct 2011, 20:31 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On 10/14/2011 4:08 PM, Marc Aramini wrote:

But there is every ridiculous allegorical parallels. At one point, he is tempted by the satan figure with almost identical verbiage. Bow before me and all this will be yours.. are you hungry? I got some food for you too. The temptation of Christ in the wilderness being replayed verbatim, healing the sick, resurrecting the dead, hastening an event that almost ends the world, overtly overtly Christ like.

Thanks for that---I had thought of Typhon as Satan without knowing how accurate that was.

The discussion of which monarch destroyed books, repented, then collected them in the Citadel now becomes a little more significant to me, and Typhon becomes more significant. If Typhon collected all the books in the Citadel---and perhaps even established the Citadel itself, using only ships that did not escape or which were nonfunctioning---then he is the source of all the books of myth that Severian read. That makes him as important in New Sun as he is in Long Sun: everyone lives in Typhon's world, the world he created or the world that remained after he was overthrown. He is the father of both.

If Typhon is Satanic, then the Gnostic structure of Urth becomes a bit more concrete. He'd be the ruler of the lowest material plane to the Outsider's/Increate's highest immaterial plane.

Andrew Mason — 14 Oct 2011, 20:32 · follows David Stockhoff

Jerry Friedman wrote:

I have a great deal of trouble believing that Wolfe wanted to imagine Incarnations in different universe

Well, C.S. Lewis did, and he was pretty conservative. That's not to say it's actually orthodox, but it's not so blatantly heretical that no basically orthodox believer could entertain it.

'La Befana' may be relevant here. It's based on the idea that the Saviour has to be born on every planet. In the author's note Wolfe makes it clear that this is a joke, a deliberate misinterpretation of 'world'; but that allows that he may actually think it true of universes.

or a world Jesus had been forgotten and the Roman Catholic Church had disappeared.

That, I admit, is trickier. But Jesus has not been _wholly_ forgotten, if the Conciliator is partly based on memories of him, and the passage in the Chasmological writings about the beating of animal-sellers relates to him.

Something very like the Catholic church certainly exists in the past of Wolfe's world - rituals involving bread and wine, crosses, saints (Wolfe in COTO makes it clear that Holy Katharine is indeed the saint of that name, of Alexandria). It's fair to ask how, from a Catholic point of view, it could perish. But we don't know that it has perished everywhere; there are plenty of places besides Urth and the Whorl where it may be flourishing.

I'm not actually committed to Jesus existing in the past of Urth; it may be there was a Jesus-analogue who was only a prophet, But if he's not literally present, he's symbolically present. After all, the various pagan gods who are alluded to aren't literally present either.

Lee Berman — 14 Oct 2011, 20:34 · follows Andrew Mason

On 10/14/2011 3:54 PM, Andrew Mason wrote:

When does Silk see Jesus? I vaguely remember something like that; perhaps in his meditations on the Outsider he comes to such a conclusion?

The clearest evidence is the statement that in one of his enlightenments he saw a man riding through a city where people were waving fronds. The man on the scaffold, and the child lying in straw, which he sees may well be Jesus as well, but that's less certain.

David Stockhoff: To me, that is all one thing, in three parts.

I guess we can all present our own ideas but I think the gulf is too great between those who think Jesus Christ The Saviour existed on Urth and those who don't to allow any convincing or

changing of minds. I think it may be a very personal thing for a lot of Wolfe readers.

Here is the quote from the Lawrence Person interview that Gerry mentions:

LP: Critics have made much of Severian as a Christ figure. Do you think that this interpretation is valid in view of the first four books?

GW: No. He is a Christian figure, which is different. He is trying to become Christ-like. He is basically what practically all of us who are men are, he is a bad man trying to be good. He makes progress as the books progress. He becomes a better person, and a larger person in a spiritual sense. But no, he is not a Christ figure. At least he never was to me.

My view is probably most closely in line with David Stockhoff's. I think of Urth and Briah as elder but less spiritually advanced than our Earth and universe. They have galactic empires and time travel and advanced biology but they haven't even had their flood yet, which we had 5000 years ago.

Thus, as David says, Severian is the only kind of savior a place like Urth could get. Believing in the Conciliator and/or New Sun wasn't going to save your soul. The best you could hope for would be for everyone around you to get drowned in a flood which would clean up the place and make room for a better class of people who eventually could be saved. Which, in Judeo-Christian lore, is what happened on earth 5000 years ago. I'd say Wolfe is rare but not alone in considering Noah's Flood as helping to prepare earth for the coming of Jesus Christ.

That seems to be what happened on Blue and what is going to happen on Green (if we can consider the sewer scene as a portent of the future).

Gerry, I think you were implying that Jesus Christ did not save humanity because we still have pagan gods and monsters and demonic possession and evil on earth. I am not religious but if I understand correctly, what Jesus Christ brought to our table and which provides for our salvation is choice. If we choose to believe in Jesus and accept him as our saviour, none of those evil things can harm our soul.

As stated earlier, my impression is that the people on Urth (and the Whorl) were not provided this choice (yet). They could believe in whatever they wanted but it wasn't going to help them or Urth. Urth (at least the Commonwealth) is in a holding pattern, waiting for...something. We discover that something is a destructive genocidal flood is what they were waiting for. Woo hoo. But I think Gene Wolfe finds that Flood a necessary part of the path a planet must undergo before it is ready for a true savior like Jesus Christ.

Marc Aramini — 14 Oct 2011, 20:41 · in reply to Lee Berman

I just don't see how Robert and Mary can be a missionary reality and Jesus couldn't exist. It's like chewbacca living on Endor. It doesn't make sense. So, yeah, for me, Christ is certainly present on ancient Urth.

Matthew Weber — 14 Oct 2011, 20:41 · in reply to Lee Berman

On Fri, Oct 14, 2011 at 1:34 PM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

Gerry, I think you were implying that Jesus Christ did not save humanity because we still have pagan gods and monsters and demonic possession and evil on earth. I am not religious but if I understand correctly, what Jesus Christ brought to our table and which provides for our salvation is choice. If we choose to believe in Jesus and accept him as our saviour, none of those evil things can harm our soul.

I would say that "salvation," in Christianity, relates to the complete forgiveness of sins. Because of our sinfulness, we are condemned and Hell is our portion after death. The sacrifice of an infinitely good being upon the cross suffices to forgive all sins, just as the sacrifices of animals in the Temple sufficed to forgive some sins under the Law. The salvation effected by the sacrifice of Christ does not exempt us from suffering in our earthly lives, and was never supposed to.

The above is, of course, a very Augustinian view of the way salvation works in the Christian faith, and people from Christian traditions in which St Augustine is less important might find a number of points of disagreement. :)

Matt +

All things are the same--familiar in enterprise, momentary in endurance, coarse in substance. All things now are as they were in the day of those whom we have buried.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121-180), Meditations, IX, 14

larry miller — 14 Oct 2011, 21:58 · in reply to David Stockhoff

I think that your theory as the source of all books is interesting. That seems more in line with his role in the other series.

On 10/14/11, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

On 10/14/2011 4:08 PM, Marc Aramini wrote:

But there is every ridiculous allegorical parallels. At one point, he is tempted by the satan figure with almost identical verbiage. Bow before me and all this will be yours.. are you hungry? I got some food for you too. The temptation of Christ in the wilderness being replayed verbatim, healing the sick, resurrecting the dead, hastening an event that almost ends the world, overtly overtly Christ like.

Thanks for that---I had thought of Typhon as Satan without knowing how accurate that was.

The discussion of which monarch destroyed books, repented, then collected them in the Citadel now becomes a little more significant to me, and Typhon becomes more significant. If Typhon collected all the books in the Citadel---and perhaps even established the Citadel itself, using only ships that did not escape or which were nonfunctioning---then he is the source of all the books of myth that Severian read. That makes him as important in New Sun as he is in Long Sun: everyone lives in Typhon's world, the world he created or the world that remained after he was overthrown. He is the father of both.

If Typhon is Satanic, then the Gnostic structure of Urth becomes a bit more concrete. He'd be the ruler of the lowest material plane to the Outsider's/Increate's highest immaterial plane.

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Jerry Friedman — 15 Oct 2011, 14:50 · in reply to Marc Aramini

From: Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com>

I just don't see how Robert and Mary can be a missionary reality and Jesus couldn't exist. It's like chewbacca living on endor. It don't make sense. So, yeah, for me, Christ is certainly present on ancient Urth.

They can be missionaries for a religion that's like Christianity but not the same. They distinctly don't mention Jesus. The religion could use the (abridged) story of Moses's death the way the Chrasomological Writings use quotations from our writers. And a female Christian missionary wouldn't let a man be naked in her presence when he has enough respect for her precepts to call her Preceptress.

The scene is extremely problematic and I can hardly see any way to draw definite conclusions about Urth's history from it. For instance, according to "A Note on the Translation", names of animals that don't exist in our world indicate animals created by "biogenetic manipulation or the importation of extrasolar breeding stock" or when "an extinct species has been restored". Do the mentions of the hesperorn and oreodont imply that those things were happening on Urth in the age of propeller planes? And why would Wolfe use "hesperorn" for the name of a bird that "fluttered to her nest" when the genus Hesperornis was practically wingless and most likely slithered on the ground when it was on land?

Jerry Friedman

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 15 Oct 2011, 19:49 · in reply to Andrew Mason

We may discuss the importance of the interviews (and of course they are important) but GW is very daring for a catholic (in dogmatic sense), and plays with very dangerous themes - take for example "Houston, 1943". I think it is a brilliant horror story, but there are themes relevant to the Urth-Earth relation and to all the Solar cycle - the world in this story is supposed to be our world (i.e., after Christ) but there are plenty of dark powers that make it look not so much different from the world of the BoTNS, there are interesting out-of-body experiences, that can be compared (though different) with Silk/Horn/Mucor experiences. To me it seems also that there is an idea that the characters of american popular imagination may be sometimes a sort of devils... - and this is after the incarnation of Christ.

Sergei Soloviev

Andrew Mason wrote:

Jerry Friedman wrote:

I have a great deal of trouble believing that Wolfe wanted to imagine Incarnations in different universe

Well, C.S. Lewis did, and he was pretty conservative. That's not to say it's actually orthodox, but it's not so blatantly heretical that no basically orthodox believer could entertain it.

'La Befana' may be relevant here. It's based on the idea that the Saviour has to be born on every planet. In the author's note Wolfe makes it clear that this is a joke, a deliberate misinterpretation of 'world'; but that allows that he may actually think it true of universes.

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Lee Berman — 17 Oct 2011, 11:20 · follows Sergei SOLOVIEV

Gerry QUinn: Also, Baldanders needed no mermaid's kiss. When Severian shares a room with him, he notices the strange scars on his neck. Baldanders knows he will have to move to the water at some point in the near future (even now he can only get about on land with the aid of an antigravity belt), and has already equipped himself with gills.

What dreams does sleeping next to Baldanders inspire in Severian? What is the name of the lake Baldanders lives next to? What is the name of the town of the lakemen who are subservient to Baldanders?

I think the text gives us plenty of hints that Baldanders' association with undines (and Abaia) starts before the time we and Severian meet him. Moreover his dependence on B, F and O for technology should make us question how capable he is of equipping himself with gills. (the "kelpie" watery origin of B and F should also give us pause for thought)

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 12:16 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

Gerry QUinn:

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What dreams does sleeping next to Baldanders inspire in Severian? What is the name of the lake Baldanders lives next to? What is the name of the town of the lakemen who are subservient to Baldanders?

He dreams of the undines, and they show him his future, in which he fights Baldanders. The lake is called after Juturna, certainly, and I can't remember the name of the village. But I do recall, I think, Juturna saying elsewhere that they watch Baldanders, because he has something in common with them. He is, of course, doing by his own technological means the equivalent of what the undersea monsters have done by unknown means. There should be no surprises that certain linkages are made.

As for the mermaid's kiss, the fact remains that Baldanders doesn't need it. How the kiss would have worked, I don't know — perhaps Juturna's saliva contains nanomachines that would have restructured Severian's body for underwater living, or perhaps Wolfe would have been content to leave the matter unexplained. But Baldanders already has his gills, hidden in plain sight by Wolfe as he likes to do.

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If I am correct and the undines are "watching" Baldanders, then he has no real direct association with them. Instead, he gets technology from other sources — including the Hieros - and from his own research. The Hieros would not engage in technology transfer to the ignorant. He has already apparently created Dr. Talos, as well as a monstrous child to slake his lust or provide spare parts, or both - so a set of gills would not seem too much of a stretch.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 14:27 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

From: Gerry Quinn

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And (I should have noted) Juturna has no antigravity belt, and she could certainly have benefited from one. Nor, if I recall correctly, does Severian mention any gills, though I suppose it may be that his eyes were drawn elsewhere. The technologies, magicks or whatever are different.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 14:37 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/17/2011 10:27 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Gerry Quinn <mailto:gerry at bindweed.com>

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I like the idea of Baldanders giving himself gills. But then who and what is he? Why is he doomed to grow so large?

Would it not work just as well if he's of Juturna's race and size, and those are natural gills Sev mistook for scars? Are we to believe Juturna must come up for air like a whale? What is her race anyway: is she a large human who swims deep, or a fish evolved to be humanoid? Let's get our assumptions straight.

Lee Berman — 17 Oct 2011, 14:53 · follows David Stockhoff

Gerry Quinn: And (I should have noted) Juturna has no antigravity belt, and she could certainly have benefited from one. Nor, if I recall correctly, does Severian mention any gills, though I suppose it may be that his eyes were drawn elsewhere. The technologies, magicks or whatever are different.

Given what we later learn, I think Severian's observation of strange scars on Baldanders' neck as a non-recognition of gills is a pretty good guess. Dr. Talos' assertion that Baldanders can breathe underwater because he is a super-genius is not a very satisfying explanation.

Given the blobs of light travelling upward from Baldanders' castle to the Hierodule ship, I think it is safe to guess that the anti-gravity belt was a gift from B, F and O, not Juturna. B, F and O's appearance at the House Absolute might also explain the origin of the anti-gravity used in the Autarch's flier.

Hm. Advanced physics technology comes from the angels while advanced biological technology comes from witches and undersea monsters. Could this reflect an engineer's prejudice regarding the sciences? Though I was a bio-science major myself I could imagine an engineering student's preference for the nice, clean confines of a physics lab over the smelly funk of a bio-lab.

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 15:10 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/17/2011 10:53 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

Hm. Advanced physics technology comes from the angels while advanced biological technology comes from witches and undersea monsters. Could this reflect an engineer's prejudice regarding the sciences? Though I was a bio-science major myself I could imagine an engineering student's preference for the nice, clean confines of a physics lab over the smelly funk of a bio-lab.

There does seem to be a light/dark division there in New Sun. It also may correspond to male/female.

I'm not sure it holds in Long Sun, however.

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 15:21 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/17/2011 10:27 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Gerry Quinn <mailto:gerry@bindweed.com>

How the kiss would have worked, I don't know — perhaps Juturna's saliva contains nanomachines that would have restructured Severian's body for underwater living, or perhaps Wolfe would have been content to leave the matter unexplained. But Baldanders already has his gills, hidden in plain sight by Wolfe as he likes to do.

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I like the idea of Baldanders giving himself gills. But then who and what is he? Why is he doomed to grow so large?

He is a man who — inspired by the sea monsters — is trying to make himself into a god by the use of technology. He intends to attain immortality, and, like many animals of our own Earth that do not die of old age, this requires continuous growth. He may well be centuries old already, and when he meets Severian at the end of _Urth_ he has not aged in fifty years, just grown larger.

Perhaps his large size also accommodates a larger brain. In any case, he has given himself gills because he knows he must eventually enter the sea and dwell there.

Would it not work just as well if he's of Juturna's race and size, and those are natural gills Sev mistook for scars? Are we to believe Juturna must come up for air like a whale? What is her race anyway: is she a large human who swims deep, or a fish evolved to be humanoid? Let's get our assumptions straight.

Juturna is not human, I believe, nor fish either. She has been created or spawned by one of the sea monsters. If we assume that the bean story refers to the sea monsters, then eggs or nanofactories or whatever were thrown into the seas of Urth, eventually becoming them. Their origin was off-Urth.

Whether she comes up for air I don't know, but I think if she had gills like Baldanders then Severian, who gave her a good looking over, would have noticed it.

As for Baldanders gills being natural: Baldanders is not natural, he is sui generis and a self-made man, right down to the gills.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 15:53 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/17/2011 11:21 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

He is a man who — inspired by the sea monsters — is trying to make himself into a god by the use of technology. He intends to attain immortality, and, like many animals of our own Earth that do not die of old age, this requires continuous growth. He may well be centuries old already, and when he meets Severian at the end of _Urth_ he has

not aged in fifty years, just grown larger.
Perhaps his large size also accommodates a larger brain. In any case, he has given himself gills because he knows he must eventually enter the sea and dwell there.

So your explanation for his growth is technological as well? Is it a side effect of immortality? Has he somehow managed to turn off a death gene in his own body, or turned on a growth gene?

I don't disagree with these possibilities, I just think natural genes are an easier path. I know a few decades ago it was popular to wonder if body death wasn't programmed, simply because it was then discovered that cell death was programmed. The two may or may not be related. But at least the presence of such an idea in popular culture might lend the theory some substance without needing strong evidence.

Would it not work just as well if he's of Juturna's race and size, and those are natural gills Sev mistook for scars? Are we to believe Juturna must come up for air like a whale? What is her race anyway: is she a large human who swims deep, or a fish evolved to be humanoid? Let's get our assumptions straight.

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Whether she comes up for air I don't know, but I think if she had gills like Baldanders then Severian, who gave her a good looking over, would have noticed it.

Eh. Maybe. Who knows what gills look like on a humanoid or what Severian notices. Recall that he had to get in bed with Baldanders to notice his gills.

As for Baldanders gills being natural: Baldanders is not natural, he is sui generis and a self-made man, right down to the gills.

This reads like a thematic assumption applied top-down to prove itself. If he's natural, so are the gills. I like Baldanders as self-created and -experimented on, but what evidence is there that he's _entirely_ unnatural or self-"made"?

Are you assuming that Baldanders was born a human man?

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 17:02 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

On 10/17/2011 11:21 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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gene in his own body, or turned on a growth gene?

The latter, I think. Whatever he has done he has tapped the cellular mechanisms of creatures such as crocodiles and tortoises, which are said to grow forever and never die of old age. (I suspect that is not quite accurate, but the idea is well known. And human growth hormone has been touted as an anti-aging technology.)

I don't disagree with these possibilities, I just think natural genes are an easier path. I know a few decades ago it was popular to wonder if body death wasn't programmed, simply because it was then discovered that cell death was programmed. The two may or may not be related. But at least the presence of such an idea in popular culture might lend the theory some substance without needing strong evidence.

Well, maybe he has managed to turn off or on some natural genes. But presumably he still must use some unnatural mechanism — control genes, drugs or whatever.

Would it not work just as well if he's of Juturna's race and size, and those are natural gills Sev mistook for scars? Are we to believe Juturna must come up for air like a whale? What is her race anyway: is she a large human who swims deep, or a fish evolved to be humanoid? Let's get our assumptions straight.

Juturna is not human, I believe, nor fish either. She has been created or spawned by one of the sea monsters. If we assume that the bean story refers to the sea monsters, then eggs or nanofactories or whatever were thrown into the seas of Urth, eventually becoming them. Their origin was off-Urth.

Whether she comes up for air I don't know, but I think if she had gills like Baldanders then Severian, who gave her a good looking over, would have noticed it.

Eh. Maybe. Who knows what gills look like on a humanoid or what Severian notices. Recall that he had to get in bed with Baldanders to notice his gills.

Perhaps they are usually covered by his shirt. Juturna likes to swan around topless or worse.

As for Baldanders gills being natural: Baldanders is not natural, he is sui generis and a self-made man, right down to the gills.

This reads like a thematic assumption applied top-down to prove itself. If he's natural, so are the gills. I like Baldanders as self-created and -experimented on, but what evidence is there that he's _entirely_ unnatural or self-"made"?

Are you assuming that Baldanders was born a human man?

Yes. Of course he could be from somewhere else, but we are not given any obvious indications of it. And we know for a fact that he is heavily into biological experimentation. If he were an amphibious alien, there would be no obvious reason for this.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 17 Oct 2011, 17:37 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/17/2011 1:02 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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

On 10/17/2011 11:21 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

He is a man who — inspired by the sea monsters — is trying to make himself into a god by the use of technology. He intends to attain immortality, and, like many animals of our own Earth that do not die of old age, this requires continuous growth. He may well be centuries old already, and when he meets Severian at the end of _Urth_ he has not aged in fifty years, just grown larger.

Perhaps his large size also accommodates a larger brain. In any case, he has given himself gills because he knows he must eventually enter the sea and dwell there.

So your explanation for his growth is technological as well? Is it a side effect of immortality? Has he somehow managed to turn off a death gene in his own body, or turned on a growth gene?

The latter, I think. Whatever he has done he has tapped the cellular mechanisms of creatures such as crocodiles and tortoises, which are said to grow forever and never die of old age. (I suspect that is not quite accurate, but the idea is well known. And human growth hormone has been touted as an anti-aging technology.)

Dr Talos more or less suggested that his functions was to nurse Baldanders. Keeping him on his meds could be part of that. There may also be side effects, such as uncontrolled rage.

I don't disagree with these possibilities, I just think natural genes are an easier path. I know a few decades ago it was popular to wonder if body death wasn't programmed, simply because it was then discovered that cell death was programmed. The two may or may not be related. But at least the presence of such an idea in popular culture might lend the theory some substance without needing strong evidence.

Well, maybe he has managed to turn off or on some natural genes. But presumably he still must use some unnatural mechanism — control genes, drugs or whatever.

Would it not work just as well if he's of Juturna's race and size, and those are natural gills Sev mistook for scars? Are we to believe Juturna must come up for air like a whale? What is her race anyway: is she a large human who swims deep, or a fish evolved to be humanoid?

Let's get our assumptions straight.

Juturna is not human, I believe, nor fish either. She has been created or spawned by one of the sea monsters. If we assume that the bean story refers to the sea monsters, then eggs or nanofactories or whatever were thrown into the seas of Urth, eventually becoming them. Their origin was off-Urth.

I didn't know we knew this. If true, Baldanders-as-undine-man would also mean "as alien." That's too much of a stretch for me.

Whether she comes up for air I don't know, but I think if she had gills like Baldanders then Severian, who gave her a good looking over, would have noticed it.

Eh. Maybe. Who knows what gills look like on a humanoid or what Severian notices. Recall that he had to get in bed with Baldanders to notice his

gills.

Perhaps they are usually covered by his shirt. Juturna likes to swan around topless or worse.

Possibly. I assumed they were on his neck where they would be visible.

As for Baldanders gills being natural: Baldanders is not natural, he is sui generis and a self-made man, right down to the gills.

This reads like a thematic assumption applied top-down to prove itself. If he's natural, so are the gills. I like Baldanders as self-created and -experimented on, but what evidence is there that he's _entirely_ unnatural or self-"made"?

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Yes. Of course he could be from somewhere else, but we are not given any obvious indications of it. And we know for a fact that he is heavily into biological experimentation. If he were an amphibious alien, there would be no obvious reason for this.

Only to keep himself on dry land and in contact with Hieros and various technologies as long as possible. But that's weak.

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 22:29 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

Hm. Advanced physics technology comes from the angels while advanced biological technology comes from witches and undersea monsters. Could this reflect an engineer's prejudice regarding the sciences? Though I was a bio-science major myself I could imagine an engineering student's preference for the nice, clean confines of a physics lab over the smelly funk of a bio-lab.

I doubt whether Wolfe would worry too much about the distinction. Both sides use the alzado glands, for example. Typhon uses high technology. And for all I know, the undersea monsters may be driven by nanotech rather than some alien biology. Their technology may be so advanced it is not recognised as such.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 23:11 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

The latter, I think. Whatever he has done he has tapped the cellular mechanisms of creatures such as crocodiles and tortoises, which are said to grow forever and never die of old age. (I suspect that is not quite accurate, but the idea is well known. And human growth hormone has been touted as an anti-aging technology.)

Dr Talos more or less suggested that his functions was to nurse Baldanders. Keeping him on his meds could be part of that. There may also be side effects, such as uncontrolled rage.

Yes, I think so. Probably Talos actually carries out any operations Baldanders needs to carry out on himself — maybe even the surgical fitting of gills.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 17 Oct 2011, 23:13 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff

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Yes, I think so. Probably Talos actually carries out any operations Baldanders needs to carry out on himself — maybe even the surgical fitting of gills.

- Gerry Quinn

Lee Berman — 18 Oct 2011, 01:49 · follows Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn- Both sides use the alzabo glands, for example.

Typhon uses high technology

I do not agree. Are you refering to the alzabo-like substance which transfers memories from the old Autarch to Severian? My interpretation of the story does not allow for this sort of thing to come from angelic B, F and O.

Wolfe, in an interview, refers to the alzabo ceremony as a "diabolic eucharist" iirc. It seems clear that the memory transfer from autarch to autarch is the same sort of process and thus is equally diabolic and not the sort of thing which would come from angel analogs. Fallen angels on the other hand...yes that is a likely source.

Who provides the processed alzabo potion for Vodalus? The otherwise pointless link of Hildegren to Vodaulus and the Cumaean suggests it comes from the Witches.

The text pairs Father Inire as two of a kind and perhaps even as a partner to the Cumaean. It is they who dabble in necromancy and unnatural, diabolic resurrections and other attempts to extend lives far beyond their allotted limit. They are shrivelled, old and ugly. They are willing to mix and interfere directly with humanity in pursuit of this goal of eternal life.

In contrast, B and F are angelic. They do not seek an extension of their own short lifespans and tend to provide humanity with a minimum of direct interference and control.

As we see in UotNS, Severian's autarchal memories provide a very minimal input to his qualification for New Sun. Their primary use is to know a set of verbal passwords to control devices created by (who else) Father Inire, the 1000 year real power behind the throne occupied by a succession of human figureheads mostly chosen from unremarkable palace staff members.

This is my view of the situation.

p.s. Yes Typhon uses high technology but they are ancient machines dating back to a time before Urth became technologically backward and had to rely on the dribs and drabs provided by limited cacogen contact. So his machines are not a part of this discussion.

Jeff Wilson — 18 Oct 2011, 03:32 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/17/2011 10:21 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

He is a man who — inspired by the sea monsters — is trying to make himself into a god by the use of technology. He intends to attain immortality, and, like many animals of our own Earth that do not die of old age, this requires continuous growth. He may well be centuries old already, and when he meets Severian at the end of _Urth_ he has not aged in fifty years, just grown larger.

If he roughly doubled in size during that 50 years, that implies he was "normal" sized about 50 years before meeting Severian, and "small" perhaps 20-30 years before then - plenty of time for the short-lived autocthons and eclectics around the lake to dissociate the two appearances. Maybe even longer, if the his growth rate was slower without the support of the water.

- > Would it not work just as well if he's of Juturna's race and size, and
- > those are natural gills Sev mistook for scars? Are we to believe Juturna
- > must come up for air like a whale? What is her race anyway: is she a
- > large human who swims deep, or a fish evolved to be humanoid? Let's get
- > our assumptions straight.

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As for Baldanders gills being natural: Baldanders is not natural, he is sui generis and a self-made man, right down to the gills.

I don't believe there are any strong distinctions. Before the Short Sun rerconnage, the final word from on high was in URTH where the Yesodis say there was no extraterrestrial higher life in Briah, only Man and Man's modifications of himself and lower animals, and their modifications, etc. Baldanders gives himself gills by altering himself technologically, likely as did Idas' forebears and similarly those of the other sailors born on Urth who Sev remarks "appeared hardly human to me."

This implies that the great beasts are not quite the Lovecraftian Things we have been lead to expect, but titanic masses of quasihuman flesh that used to be something like an individual. If Baldanders can double his size in 50 years, the thousand years since Typhon's reign could allow similarly growing humanoids to double 20 times over. This potentially if improbably allows increasing their size a million times but is more than enough to achieve the mountainous size claimed by Jonas.

It also would satisfy David's desire for dire beats with dread mind powers, because they could have the genes for psionic abilities as easily as Decuman and Typhon and Ceryx seem to have them.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com

Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana

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Jeff Wilson — 18 Oct 2011, 08:51 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/17/2011 9:53 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

Gerry Quinn: And (I should have noted) Juturna has no antigravity belt, and she could certainly have benefited from one. Nor, if I recall correctly, does Severian mention any gills, though I suppose it may be that his eyes were drawn elsewhere.

The technologies, magicks or whatever are different.

Juturna's got long green hair to cover her neck, though it should have swept back at least on the occasion that she lurches from the river.

Given the blobs of light travelling upward from Baldanders' castle to the Hierodule ship, I think it is safe to guess that the anti-gravity belt was a gift from B, F and O, not Juturna. B, F and O's appearance at the House Absolute might also explain the origin of the anti-gravity used in the Autarch's flier.

Hm. Advanced physics technology comes from the angels while advanced biological technology comes from witches and undersea monsters. Could this reflect an engineer's prejudice regarding the sciences? Though I was a bio-science major myself I could imagine an engineering student's preference for the nice, clean confines of a physics lab over the smelly funk of a bio-lab.

Don't forget that Inire is a Yesodi but supplies both mechanisms and biology in the form of the numerous animal hybrids.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
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Jeff Wilson — 18 Oct 2011, 09:00 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/17/2011 12:37 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:
Dr Talos more or less suggested that his functions was to nurse Baldanders. Keeping him on his meds could be part of that. There may also be side effects, such as uncontrolled rage.

His flipping out at the Well of Orchids as well as his decision to fight with Sev could be due to his perpetually adolescent hormones getting the better of him.

Only to keep himself on dry land and in contact with Hieros and various technologies as long as possible. But that's weak.

There are no Hieros left to be in contact with, just Hierodules.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
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David Stockhoff — 18 Oct 2011, 12:06 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/17/2011 11:32 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

I don't believe there are any strong distinctions. Before the Short Sun rerconnage, the final word from on high was in URTH where the Yesodis say there was no extraterrestrial higher life in Briah, only Man and Man's modifications of himself and lower animals, and their modifications, etc. Baldanders gives himself gills by altering himself technologically, likely as did Idas' forebears and similarly those of the other sailors born on Urth who Sev remarks "appeared hardly human to me."

This implies that the great beasts are not quite the Lovecraftian Things we have been lead to expect, but titanic masses of quasihuman flesh that used to be something like an individual. If Baldanders can double his size in 50 years, the thousand years since Typhon's reign could allow similarly growing humanoids to double 20 times over. This potentially if improbably allows increasing their size a million times but is more than enough to achieve the mountainous size claimed by Jonas.

It also would satisfy David's desire for dire beats with dread mind powers, because they could have the genes for psionic abilities as easily as Decuman and Typhon and Ceryx seem to have them.

More importantly, it fits their proposed (observed?) ability to squeeze off undines, making psionic powers unnecessary to postulate. It also seems to fit the "horror" theme of mindless, almost cancer-like growth that pops up here and there. And it makes Baldanders a straightforward key to the Beasts' nature. It explains the lack of any hint of personality among the Beasts. In fact see no reason to assume they were originally "individuals" at all except in a technical sense.

David Stockhoff — 18 Oct 2011, 12:07 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/18/2011 5:00 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/17/2011 12:37 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

Only to keep himself on dry land and in contact with Hieros and various technologies as long as possible. But that's weak.

There are no Hieros left to be in contact with, just Hierodules.

It's an abbreviation.

Lee Berman — 18 Oct 2011, 12:57 · follows David Stockhoff

Jeff Wilson: Before the Short Sun rerconnage, the final word from on high was in URTH where the Yesodis say there was no extraterrestrial higher life in Briah, only Man and Man's modifications of himself and lower animals, and their modifications, etc.

I tend to agree with this. There is some suggestion that the Hiero race was formed from a lower species (the watery origin of Barbatus and Famulimus?) but generally I think there is an implication that all sentient life in Briah is of human origin.

This potentially if improbably allows increasing their size a million times but is more than enough to achieve the mountainous size claimed by Jonas.

Not to mention the island-sized bulk of Tzadkiel reported by Severian for his first sighting of him/her in the big mirror book.

Don't forget that Inire is a Yesodi but supplies both mechanisms and biology in the form of the numerous animal hybrids.

I think it is fair to say Inire is/was a hierodule but I don't think he was a Yesodi. It is my view that Inire was a crewman on Tzadkiel's ship, rising as high as First Mate, but instigated a mutiny, was defeated by those loyal to Tzadkiel (including Severian) and exiled to Urth. I think Inire's lack of all heavenly accoutrements possessed by the other hiero-types suggests he was off the ship before it arrived in Yesod.

There are no Hieros left to be in contact with, just Hierodules.

David Stockhoff- It's an abbreviation.

Yeah, it is confusing but perhaps intentionally and to be expected. The nomenclature for the hierarchy of angels in Earth religion is even more confusing. I think the text does call the Homo superior race created in Briah as "Hieros". It also mentions Hierodules, Hierogrammates and Hierarchs. Was it Dan'I who took to using the term "hiero-dudes" as a generic term for them all? I borrowed the concept but use the more sober term, "hiero-types".

...More importantly, it fits their proposed (observed?) ability to squeeze off undines, making psionic powers unnecessary to postulate. It also seems to fit the "horror" theme of mindless, almost cancer-like growth that pops up here and there.

I agree, though by the time of Short Sun writing, Wolfe seems to have softened his view of such women. Seawrack does not possess the inherent repulsiveness of Juturna. (since mythology conflates undines, mermaids and sirens I am pretty sure Wolfe meant there to be a connection between these two seductive, aquatic characters).

And it makes Baldanders a straightforward key to the Beasts' nature. It explains the lack of any hint of personality among the Beasts. In fact see no reason to assume they were originally "individuals" at all except in a technical sense.

I agree. Though I still think it is a good bet that Cilinia gave rise to Great Scylla (who might be Abaia).

larry miller — 18 Oct 2011, 15:21 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Where in Urth does it say that? It was always my understanding that there were many alien beings on Urth and part of Severians unreliability as narrator was his inability to distinguish them from other beings.

On 10/18/11, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

On 10/17/2011 11:32 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

I don't believe there are any strong distinctions. Before the Short Sun rerconage, the final word from on high was in URTH where the Yesodis say there was no extraterrestrial higher life in Briah, only Man and Man's modifications of himself and lower animals, and their modifications, etc. Baldanders gives himself gills by altering himself technologically, likely as did Idas' forebears and similarly those of the other sailors born on Urth who Sev remarks "appeared hardly human to me."

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Marc Aramini — 18 Oct 2011, 15:25 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

--- On Mon, 10/17/11, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:

From: Jeff Wilson <jwilson at clueland.com>

I don't believe there are any strong distinctions. Before the Short Sun >rerconage, the final word from on high was in URTH where the Yesodis >say there was no extraterrestrial higher life in Briah, only Man and >Man's modifications of himself and lower animals, and their >modifications, etc.

I don't believe Short Sun changes this or retcons it, I think the Vanished People and the inhumans are man and their modifications of themselves. Tree genetic template + mankind = vanished people, etc. The tree integration is simply a modification of man and the lower animals.

But that's just me I guess.

Jeff Wilson — 18 Oct 2011, 16:45 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/18/2011 7:06 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/17/2011 11:32 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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It also would satisfy David's desire for dire beats with dread mind powers, because they could have the genes for psionic abilities as easily as Decuman and Typhon and Ceryx seem to have them.

More importantly, it fits their proposed (observed?) ability to squeeze off undines, making psionic powers unnecessary to postulate. It also seems to fit the "horror" theme of mindless, almost cancer-like growth that pops up here and there.

I'm not seeing any evidence the undines are squeezed off: Idas and Juturna seem to have distinct personalities. The pandours also seem to be undines, and their armored state heavily suggests they are either few in number or individually valuable or both, rather than pinched off a mountain-sized mass at need. That they are being deployed on a surface vessel also suggests that Juturna-class minions, who could convey them as fast or faster concealed beneath the surface, are spread a bit thin.

Growth is another important theme, it seems like it is one of the easiest modifications to do, and since it is established that it can be done during life by the examples of Baldanders and the Exultants, this does not rule out land-born humans becoming huge undines eventually. Juturna could have been equally likely as Jolenta to be expelled from the witches for being too lustful (she only wants the humans' love, recall) and fallen in with the Abaians.

Or she could have returned to her original family, the Abaians. It is very suspicious that Dorcas is seen to revive when she is put in the lake water, that the boatman has such a long life in

frequent contact with the water, and they previously lived in a neighborhood surrounded by the river on three sides. If Severian already has undine blood in him, the attraction to a giant undine woman is much less improbable and consumation is less matter of scale than of time.

And it returns us to a Lovecraftian theme, as in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth."

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
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Jeff Wilson — 18 Oct 2011, 16:53 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/18/2011 7:07 AM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/18/2011 5:00 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/17/2011 12:37 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

Only to keep himself on dry land and in contact with Hieros and various technologies as long as possible. But that's weak.

There are no Hieros left to be in contact with, just Hierodules.

It's an abbreviation.

It's also indistinguishable from the name for their forebears, and from similar abbreviations of Hierogrammates and Hierarchs.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
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Lee Berman — 18 Oct 2011, 19:01 · follows Jeff Wilson

larry miller: It was always my understanding that there were many alien beings on Urth and part of Severians unreliability as narrator was his inability to distinguish them from other beings.

Yes, but I think the question is whether these aliens are entirely a product of evolution on other planets or whether they are humans who left Urth in earlier waves, mutated, evolved and are now returned.

Marc Aramini: I think the Vanished People and the inhumi are man and their modifications of themselves. Tree genetic template + mankind = vanished people, etc. The tree integration is simply a modification of man and the lower animals. But that's just me I guess.

I think the model makes sense. The thing is, if this story is going to retain a semblance of Judeo-Christian relevance, I think a human occupied universe makes some sense. Nobody really wants a green blob or crystalline structure Jesus (well at least not Gene Wolfe, I guess).

Jeff Wilson: I'm not seeing any evidence the undines are squeezed off: Idas and Juturna seem to have distinct personalities.

So, I would say, does Tinkerbell Tzadkiel and it seems likely she was squeezed off. Do you have any theory on what was going on with Great Scylla and the small army of presumably detachable women that seem to be growing from her back?

The pandours also seem to be undines, and their armored state heavily suggests they are either few in number or individually valuable or both, rather than pinched off a mountain-sized mass at need.

Well, I think we agree that the pandours of Erebus are akin to the undines of Abaia, pinched off or not. But since we don't see them in action, the armor could be a mostly a literary device to show they are warriors (as their pale skin is to show they are from the south/antarctic).

On the other, it may be that the pinching off process isn't quite a snap for megatherians as Tzadkiel makes it appear. If Seawrack is a pinched off agent from the Mother (and I know that isn't a certain thing) it would seem The Mother decided it was more expedient to use the already created siren after her arm got shot off, rather than create a new one.

Juturna could have been equally likely as Jolenta to be expelled from the witches for being too lustful (she only wants the humans' love, recall) and fallen in with the Abaians.

Or she could have returned to her original family, the Abaians. It is very suspicious that Dorcas is seen to revive when she is put in the lake water, that the boatman has such a long life in frequent contact with the water, and they previously lived in a neighborhood surrounded by the river on three sides.

I think this is an interesting theory. I especially like the observation of the riverine nature of Dorcas and her husband's house. It kinda feeds into my own theories actually.

There are three old boatmen who all seem to have a special interest in undines. One is Dorcas' husband. Another is on the dock after Severian is rescued from drowning. The third is Maxellindis' "uncle". I suspect all three are (essentially) the same person.

Jeff Wilson — 18 Oct 2011, 21:38 · in reply to Lee Berman

On Tue, October 18, 2011 14:01, Lee Berman wrote:

larry miller: It was always my understanding that there were many alien beings on Urth and part of Severians unreliability as narrator was his inability to distinguish them from other beings.

Yes, but I think the question is whether these aliens are entirely a product of evolution on other planets or whether they are humans who left Urth in earlier waves, mutated, evolved and are now returned.

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Jeff Wilson: I'm not seeing any evidence the undines are squeezed off: Idas and Juturna seem to have distinct personalities.

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Tzadkerbell and the Captain have different responsibilities and moods, but both are pretty indulgent to Sev. Plus, they acknowledge they are divided from the same greater being. Juturna and Idas also have much more distinctive names than Zak and Tzadkiel.

Do you have any theory on what was going on with Great Scylla and the small army of presumably detachable women that seem to be growing from her back?

I still haven't gotten around to those, but it's clear to me from the list chatter that the Short Sun books have numerous continuity conflicts with the New Sun books.

The pandours also seem to be undines, and their armored state heavily suggests they are either few in number or individually valuable or both, rather than pinched off a mountain-sized mass at need.

Well, I think we agree that the pandours of Erebus are akin to the undines of Abaia, pinched off or not. But since we don't see them in action, the armor could be a mostly a literary device to show they are warriors (as their pale skin is to show they are from the south/antarctic).

How do we know they are Erebus'? Don't his overtly attested forces come over the ice onto the land like light infantry? The pandours are heavy marine forces.

I don't see that skin color supports their Ereban origin. Fuegians would have to sit at the back of an Alabaman bus, there's no Antarctic natives to judge by, and arctic indigines like Sammi and Inuits are also darker than the average caucasian. Maybe if they are white like cavefish from living in Ereban darkness under the ice or even in some of his lava tubes.

On the other, it may be that the pinching off process isn't quite a snap for megatherians as Tzadkiel makes it appear. If Seawrack is a pinched off agent from the Mother (and I know that isn't a certain thing) it would seem The Mother decided it was more expedient to use the already created siren after her arm got shot off, rather than create a new one.

Juturna could have been equally likely as Jolenta to be expelled from the witches for being too lustful (she only wants the humans' love, recall) and fallen in with the Abaians.

Or she could have returned to her original family, the Abaians. It is very suspicious that Dorcas is seen to revive when she is put in the lake water, that the boatman has such a long life in frequent contact with the water, and they previously lived in a neighborhood surrounded by the river on three sides.

I think this is an interesting theory. I especially like the observation of the riverine nature of Dorcas and her husband's house. It kinda feeds into my own theories actually.

Their house and neighborhood is also covered with green growth, like the green of the undines' hair, the Green Man's pond scum, and the giant sloth's coat at the Well near the fountain,

though that is a thematic link rather than a continuous one. Still, a pretty soggy outfit in moist, sultry company.

There are three old boatmen who all seem to have a special interest in undines.

One is Dorcas' husband. Another is on the dock after Severian is rescued from drowning.

The third is Maxellindis' "uncle". I suspect all three are (essentially) the same person.

Agree on the first two. The interest in undines doesn't mean they are the same person, essentially all boatmen would have an interest in undines since their profession puts them in a place to encounter them most frequently.

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David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 01:11 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/18/2011 5:38 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

The pandours also seem to be undines, and their armored state heavily suggests they are either few in number or individually valuable or both, rather than pinched off a mountain-sized mass at need.

Well, I think we agree that the pandours of Erebus are akin to the undines of Abaia, pinched off or not. But since we don't see them in action, the armor could be a mostly a literary device to show they are warriors (as their pale skin is to show they are from the south/antarctic).

How do we know they are Erebus'? Don't his overtly attested forces come over the ice onto the land like light infantry? The pandours are heavy marine forces.

I don't see that skin color supports their Ereban origin. Fuegians would have to sit at the back of an Alabaman bus, there's no Antarctic natives to judge by, and arctic indigines like Sammi and Inuits are also darker than the average caucasian. Maybe if they are white like cavefish from living in Ereban darkness under the ice or even in some of his lava tubes.

That was always my thought. Possibly the long winters at the Pole would be the cause. OTOH, such details don't need to correspond exactly to our world.

Their house and neighborhood is also covered with green growth, like the green of the undines' hair, the Green Man's pond scum, and the giant sloth's coat at the Well near the fountain, though that is a thematic link rather than a continuous one. Still, a pretty soggy outfit in moist, sultry company.

Aha

Jeff Wilson — 19 Oct 2011, 03:21 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/18/2011 8:11 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/18/2011 5:38 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

I don't see that skin color supports their Ereban origin. Fuegians would have to sit at the back of an Alabaman bus, there's no Antarctic natives to judge by, and arctic indigines like Sammi and Inuits are also darker than the average caucasian. Maybe if they are white like cavefish from living in Ereban darkness under the ice or even in some of his lava tubes.

That was always my thought. Possibly the long winters at the Pole would be the cause. OTOH, such details don't need to correspond exactly to our world.

I wouldn't think so either, except for the inclusion of the discussion on how immigrant peoples come to resemble the likeness of the indigenous inhabitants.

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Lee Berman — 19 Oct 2011, 04:47 · follows Jeff Wilson

David Stockhoff: I'm not sure why Death + Sin = monsters, beyond that the whole reason Adam and Eve were kicked out of Eden is that they sinned and thus found mortality. Cue Pandora and her box.

Perhaps the monsters figure in if we add Adam's first mate Lilith (Jahi) to the mix. After the failed relationship, she mated with a fallen angel and produced many of earth's mythic monsters. (also, child-stealing was her special province, a tradition which extended to faerie folk and kelpies and such creatures who seem to lurk in the shadows of Wolfe's stories)

Jeff Wilson: How do we know they (the large pale pandours on the ship) are Erebus'?

Well, I don't suppose we can know but I find it to be a reasonable conclusion. Erebus is said to command cold, pale warriors. The ship and the undines and the voices seem to clearly invoke Abaia. I take this scene as symbolic of the alliance between these two powers (or perhaps an even closer connection).

I don't see that skin color supports their Ereban origin. Fuegians would have to sit at the back of an Alabaman bus, there's no Antarctic natives to judge by, and arctic indigines like Sammi and Inuits are also darker than the average caucasian.

That's good anthropology. But I interpret this idea in more literary terms. The text does say Erebus resides in the Antarctic, like his volcanic namesake, and that he commands pale warriors. Moreover, the most southern-residing character we meet is Hallvard, who is light in coloration. IIRC, Ascians are pale also, so I have tended to think that pale color= colder home environment is a connection Wolfe uses in this story.

David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 11:37 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/18/2011 11:21 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 10/18/2011 8:11 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/18/2011 5:38 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

I don't see that skin color supports their Ereban origin. Fuegians would have to sit at the back of an Alabaman bus, there's no Antarctic natives to judge by, and arctic indigines like Sammi and Inuits are also darker than the average caucasian. Maybe if they are white like cavefish from

living in Ereban darkness under the ice or even in some of his lava tubes.

That was always my thought. Possibly the long winters at the Pole would be the cause. OTOH, such details don't need to correspond exactly to our world.

I wouldn't think so either, except for the inclusion of the discussion on how immigrant peoples come to resemble the likeness of the indigenous inhabitants.

Right. But we don't know the pandours come from the southern peninsula. Since they arrive by troopship, they could be coming from anywhere, including farther south. Erebus is Darkness but also an Antarctic volcano. Since Antarctica lacks natives

On another topic, maybe the Wall is still useful after all. The troopship appears to have evaded any flyer patrols.

David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 11:39 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/19/2011 12:47 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

David Stockhoff: I'm not sure why Death + Sin = monsters, beyond that the whole reason Adam and Eve were kicked out of Eden is that they sinned and thus found mortality. Cue Pandora and her box.

Perhaps the monsters figure in if we add Adam's first mate Lilith (Jahi) to the mix.

After the failed relationship, she mated with a fallen angel and produced many of earth's mythic monsters. (also, child-stealing was her special province, a tradition which extended to faerie folk and kelpies and such creatures who seem to lurk in the shadows of Wolfe's stories)

I did not know that!

Jeff Wilson: How do we know they (the large pale pandours on the ship) are Erebus'?

Well, I don't suppose we can know but I find it to be a reasonable conclusion.

Erebus is said to command cold, pale warriors. The ship and the undines and the voices seem to clearly invoke Abaia. I take this scene as symbolic of the alliance between these two powers (or perhaps an even closer connection).

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uses in this story.

You're ahead of me.

Gerry Quinn — 19 Oct 2011, 11:54 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

Gerry Quinn:

Both sides use the alzano glands, for example.

Typhon uses high technology

I do not agree. Are you referring to the alzano-like substance which transfers memories from the old Autarch to Severian? My interpretation of the story does not allow for this sort of thing to come from angelic B, F and O.

They aren't angels. For example, they engage in technology transfer with Baldanders, who vivisects women. The alzano essence as used by the Autarchs is apparently benign [and the alzano itself is described as having been brought from a distant planet for the use and benefit of mankind, although perhaps whoever said that was allowing him or herself a touch of irony — I don't remember. It may well be that they were initially confined to zoos or farms. Like the inhumi, the alzano would be simple animals if they did not feed on people.]

Wolfe, in an interview, refers to the alzano ceremony as a "diabolic eucharist" iirc. It seems clear that the memory transfer from autarch to autarch is the same sort of process and thus is equally diabolic and not the sort of thing which would come from angel analogs. Fallen angels on the other hand...yes that is a likely source.

The Eucharist is also the same sort of process as a diabolical Eucharist. Might not this be the appropriate analogy? There is certainly one analogical element, as in the autarchial process, the memory donor voluntarily offers himself as a sacrifice, which is not the case in the "diabolical Eucharist" of Vodalus and his followers.

p.s. Yes Typhon uses high technology but they are ancient machines dating back to a time before Urth became technologically backward and had to rely on the dribs and drabs provided by limited cacogen contact. So his machines are not a part of this discussion.

That seems arbitrary. Both sides use whatever physical technology, biological technology or other magic is to hand, in my opinion. That also seems in accord with the other works of Wolfe, who does not, I think, consider any form of technology intrinsically evil, but only the uses of it.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 19 Oct 2011, 12:16 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

Larry Miller:

It was always my understanding that there were many alien beings on Urth and part of Severian's unreliability as narrator was his inability to distinguish them from other beings.

Yes, but I think the question is whether these aliens are entirely a product of evolution on other planets or whether they are humans who left Urth in earlier waves, mutated, evolved and are now returned.

You suggested earlier that Wolfe indicated this somewhere in *_Urth_*. Have you a link to this?

Marc Aramini: I think the Vanished People and the inhumani are man and their modifications of themselves. Tree genetic template + mankind = vanished people, etc. The tree integration is simply a modification of man and the lower animals. But that's just me I guess.

I think the model makes sense. The thing is, if this story is going to retain a semblance of Judeo-Christian relevance, I think a human occupied universe makes some sense. Nobody really wants a green blob or crystalline structure Jesus (well at least not Gene Wolfe, I guess).

I don't see why not. Wolfe's aliens are often humanoid, but by no means always, and in many of his stories (certainly including the *Urth* cycle) he indicates that robots and androids as pretty much equivalent to people, and often morally superior. Even if all the aliens in the stories evolved from humans (and I personally think it's pretty clear that they did not) the robots and androids obviously cannot have. A robot Jesus is not part of the Solar Cycle, obviously, but the concept would sit better with it than with most SF novels, crystalline structure or no.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 13:25 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 10/19/2011 7:54 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: Lee Berman <mailto:severiansola@hotmail.com>

Gerry Quinn:

Both sides use the alzabo glands, for example.
Typhon uses high technology

I do not agree. Are you referring to the alzabo-like substance which transfers memories from the old Autarch to Severian? My interpretation of the story does not allow for this sort of thing to come from angelic B, F and O.

They aren't angels. For example, they engage in technology transfer with Baldanders, who vivisects women. The alzabo essence as used by the Autarchs is apparently benign [and the alzabo itself is described as having been brought from a distant planet for the use and benefit of mankind, although perhaps whoever said that was allowing him or herself a touch of irony — I don't remember. It may well be that they were initially confined to zoos or farms. Like the inhumani, the alzabo would be simple animals if they did not feed on people.]

Is the term "angels" used here in its sense of "agents of good"? I'm not sure I see the slightest hint of morality or ethics anywhere in *Briah*, on any "side."

Then again, I don't see angels themselves as particularly "good."

Wolfe, in an interview, refers to the alzabo ceremony as a "diabolic eucharist" iirc. It seems clear that the memory transfer from autarch to autarch is the same sort of process and thus is equally diabolic and not the sort of thing which would come from angel analogs. Fallen angels on the other hand...yes that is a likely source.

The Eucharist is also the same sort of process as a diabolical Eucharist. Might not this be the appropriate analogy? There is certainly one analogical element, as in the autarchial process, the memory donor voluntarily offers himself as a sacrifice, which is not the case in the "diabolical Eucharist" of Vodalus and his followers.

Again, I don't see any worthwhile distinction between fallen and unfallen technology. Both processes are unspeakable perversions but it is their users (and uses) that distinguish them.

p.s. Yes Typhon uses high technology but they are ancient machines dating back to a time before Urth became technologically backward and had to rely on the driblets and drabs provided by limited cacogen contact. So his machines are not a part of this discussion.

That seems arbitrary. Both sides use whatever physical technology, biological technology or other magic is to hand, in my opinion. That also seems in accord with the other works of Wolfe, who does not, I think, consider any form of technology intrinsically evil, but only the uses of it.

I agree with this, but I also see First Empire technology as of native derivation.

Lee Berman — 19 Oct 2011, 14:56 · follows David Stockhoff

Gerry Quinn: There is certainly one analogical element, as in the autarchial process, the memory donor voluntarily offers himself as a sacrifice, which is not the case in the "diabolical Eucharist" of Vodalus and his followers.

The process with the old Autarch does, superficially, seem more benign than the Vodalus banquet and the voluntary aspect is probably part of it. But in my view, the old Autarch is a somewhat ineffectual figurehead in front of the true power of his vizier and he is a sacrificial lamb for the hiero-types. He seems like a very sad and unfulfilled human being. The alzano-like potion did him no favors (nor Severian, really). Without it he (Apian?) would have remained a honey steward and probably ended up like the rather happier character of Odilo.

That also seems in accord with the other works of Wolfe, who does not, I think, consider any form of technology intrinsically evil, but only the uses of it.

Given a purely literary reading of the text this might be so. But I am not only interested in the text but also the mental processes in the individual who created the text. I suppose Biology is an inherently "ickier" science than physics but I am just saying I detect an extra "ewww" factor in Wolfe's thinking about biology which goes back to 5HoC. (just had a thoughtflash of Jonas being disgusted with his meat parts; Sidero also. Perhaps Wolfe does sympathize with them a bit).

Yes, but I think the question is whether these aliens are entirely a product of evolution on other planets or whether they are humans who left Urth in earlier waves, mutated, evolved and are now returned.

You suggested earlier that Wolfe indicated this somewhere in *Urth*. Have you a link to this?

I find it inherent in the story. We are first introduced to cacogens as weird, ugly aliens. Later the text reveals that some of them (hierodules) are of human origin. Why not all of them?

in many of his stories (certainly including the Urth cycle) he indicates that robots and androids as pretty much equivalent to people. A robot Jesus is not part of the Solar Cycle, obviously, but the concept would sit better with it than with most SF novels.

Perhaps. But it still doesn't happen. I think Long Sun would have been the perfect place for Wolfe to create a non-human savior. Could have been a chem or a god in the mainframe. But nope. Once again, a human gets the role.

Marc Aramini — 19 Oct 2011, 15:27 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

--- On Wed, 10/19/11, Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com> wrote:

From: Gerry Quinn <gerry at bindweed.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Urth-Earth links
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Date: Wednesday, October 19, 2011, 5:16 AM

From: Lee Berman

This is from Lee, I think:

I think the model makes sense. The thing is, if this story is going to retain a semblance of Judeo-Christian relevance, I think a human occupied universe makes some sense. Nobody really wants a green blob or crystalline structure Jesus (well at least not Gene Wolfe, I guess).

?This is from Gerry:

I don't see why not. Wolfe's aliens are often humanoid, but by no means always, and in many of his stories (certainly including the Urth cycle) he indicates that robots and androids as pretty much equivalent to people, and often morally superior. — Even if all the aliens in the stories evolved from humans (and I personally think it's pretty clear that they did not) the robots and androids obviously cannot have. A robot Jesus is not part of the Solar Cycle, obviously, but the concept would sit better with it than with most SF novels, crystalline structure or no.

- Gerry Quinn

?In this case, I feel the human nature of a messiah is very very necessary to?Wolfe's orthodox redemptive mindset: for a true scapegoat or savior to be valid, it must be part and parcel of the group it redeems.

Perhaps imitation approaches transubstantiation, but the possibility of goodness in humanity to be chosen over evil, coupled with the perfectibility of the soul, would certainly never preclude a human savior, (though, if we want to map a reconciliatory path to Severian, he may just be ultimately the projection of a very advanced machine system by the end of Urth)

David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 16:00 · in reply to Lee Berman

On 10/19/2011 10:56 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

That also seems in accord with the other works of Wolfe, who does not, I think, consider any form of technology intrinsically evil, but only the uses of it.

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Life is corruption, literally and figuratively. To live is to rot and die (and rot again).

Yes, but I think the question is whether these aliens are entirely a product of evolution on other planets or whether they are humans who left Urth in earlier waves, mutated, evolved and are now returned.

You suggested earlier that Wolfe indicated this somewhere in _Urth_. Have you a link to this?

I find it inherent in the story. We are first introduced to cacogens as weird, ugly aliens. Later the text reveals that some of them (hierodules) are of human origin. Why not all of them?

I wouldn't take it to the extreme, but I see a certain human echo-chamber aspect to Briah. It's like a petri dish for Man. If it isn't OF us, it reflects us.

Jeff Wilson — 19 Oct 2011, 16:20 · in reply to David Stockhoff

`On Wed, October 19, 2011 08:25, David Stockhoff wrote:
On 10/19/2011 7:54 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

The Eucharist is also the same sort of process as a diabolical Eucharist. Might not this be the appropriate analogy? There is certainly one analogical element, as in the autarchial process, the memory donor voluntarily offers himself as a sacrifice, which is not the case in the "diabolical Eucharist" of Vodalus and his followers.

Again, I don't see any worthwhile distinction between fallen and unfallen technology. Both processes are unspeakable perversions but it is their users (and uses) that distinguish them.

How is the analeptic use any worse than any other organ donation? Do you hold with Christian Science or Jehova's Witnesses?

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

Gerry Quinn — 19 Oct 2011, 16:25 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: Lee Berman

Gerry Quinn:

There is certainly one analogical element, as in the autarchial process, the memory donor voluntarily offers himself as a sacrifice, which is not the case in the "diabolical Eucharist" of Vodalus and his followers.

The process with the old Autarch does, superficially, seem more benign than the Vodalus banquet and the voluntary aspect is probably part of it.

More than that. One can argue that it symbolises a real Eucharist, as distinct from the diabolical one of the Vodalarii.

But in my view, the old Autarch is a somewhat ineffectual figurehead in front of the true power of of his vizier and he is a sacrificial lamb for the hiero-types. He seems like a very sad and unfulfilled human being. The alzado-like potion did him no favors (nor Severian, really). Without it he (Apian?) would have remained a honey steward and probably ended up like the rather happier character of Odilo.

One could make a similar argument regarding the life of Jesus Christ. Doing one's duty for the people of Urth is not necessarily pleasant or comfortable, nor does it make one a dupe.

That also seems in accord with the other works of Wolfe, who does not, I think, consider any form of technology intrinsically evil, but only the uses of it.

Given a purely literary reading of the text this might be so. But I am not only interested in the text but also the mental processes in the individual who created the text. I suppose Biology is an inherently "ickier" science than physics but I am just saying I detect an extra "ewww" factor in Wolfe's thinking about biology which goes back to 5HoC. (just had a thoughtflash of Jonas being disgusted with his meat parts; Sidero also. Perhaps Wolfe does sympathize with them a bit).

I think you're projecting. Sure Wolfe's robots are sometimes a bit disgusted by flesh, or feel themselves superior, like the narrator of Eyebeam. In All the Hues of Hell, by contrast, the robot feels like an equal, and hopes to have a relationship with a human woman. In Long Sun, the

chems are superior in some ways and inferior in others. In Fifth Head, Mr. Million is not a perfect copy.

Yes, but I think the question is whether these aliens are entirely a product of evolution on other planets or whether they are humans who left Urth in earlier waves, mutated, evolved and are now returned.

You suggested earlier that Wolfe indicated this somewhere in _Urth_. Have you a link to this?

I find it inherent in the story. We are first introduced to cacogens as weird, ugly aliens. Later the text reveals that some of them (hierodules) are of human origin. Why not all of them?

Uh... the tentacles and stuff?

There's also the point that in Wolfe, Earth itself is more often than not the native home of non-human intelligent races.

in many of his stories (certainly including the Urth cycle) he indicates that robots and androids as pretty much equivalent to people. A robot Jesus is not part of the Solar Cycle, obviously, but the concept would sit better with it than with most SF novels.

Perhaps. But it still doesn't happen. I think Long Sun would have been the perfect place for Wolfe to create a non-human savior. Could have been a chem or a god in the mainframe. But nope. Once again, a human gets the role.

Is Silk a saviour? He seems more of a Moses. In Short Sun he may be more, but in this case he actually HAS melded with one of the digital gods of Mainframe.

La Befana might be a better example, in that the titular character seems to expect Jesus to be born again as a human on a planet where humans live along with an alien species. But then again, she could be wrong. She is alarmed by Zozz — could that be a subtle hint that the child she seeks will actually be born to one of Zozz's people?

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 16:35 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/19/2011 12:20 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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On 10/19/2011 7:54 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Again, I don't see any worthwhile distinction between fallen and unfallen technology. Both processes are unspeakable perversions but it is their users (and uses) that distinguish them.

How is the analeptic use any worse than any other organ donation? Do you hold with Christian Science or Jehova's Witnesses?

Since both those sects define murder and suicide and messing with corpses as immoral, I guess I do!

António Pedro Marques — 19 Oct 2011, 17:12 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote (19-10-2011 17:35):

On 10/19/2011 12:20 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

`On Wed, October 19, 2011 08:25, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/19/2011 7:54 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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How is the analeptic use any worse than any other organ donation? Do you hold with Christian Science or Jehova's Witnesses?

Since both those sects define murder and suicide and messing with corpses as immoral, I guess I do!

Interesting. Outside some parts of Christianity, I have seldom seen suicide considered immoral. Could you expand?

David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 17:22 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 10/19/2011 1:12 PM, Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote (19-10-2011 17:35):

On 10/19/2011 12:20 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

`On Wed, October 19, 2011 08:25, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/19/2011 7:54 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Interesting. Outside some parts of Christianity, I have seldom seen suicide considered immoral. Could you expand?

Not really---I was actually just being snarky. I don't know of any examples outside The Big Three either. Even Islam disapproves of it.

Jeff Wilson — 19 Oct 2011, 17:23 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Wed, October 19, 2011 11:35, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/19/2011 12:20 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

`On Wed, October 19, 2011 08:25, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/19/2011 7:54 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Since both those sects define murder and suicide and messing with corpses as immoral, I guess I do!

How is messing with corpses immoral? Do they not allow embalming?

Jeff Wilson - <jwilson at clueland.com >
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David Stockhoff — 19 Oct 2011, 17:29 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/19/2011 1:23 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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On 10/19/2011 12:20 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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Since both those sects define murder and suicide and messing with corpses as immoral, I guess I do!

How is messing with corpses immoral? Do they not allow embalming?

Hey, it's not MY religion. Obviously there's a fine line that tends to be drawn around "proper" (and legal) and all other practices. Since only the Autarch practices this one, you could go either way: is it a legitimate part of a "cult of the Emperor"? or something to keep hidden from view? or both?

Any way you slice it, it's not normal! (cue Church Lady). And worse, it resembles (as has been said many times) pagan slanders of Church practices. Parody or perversion, take your pick.

António Pedro Marques — 19 Oct 2011, 22:54 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <[mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net](mailto:dstockhoff@verizon.net)>

- > Dr Talos more or less suggested that his functions was to nurse
- > Baldanders. Keeping him on his meds could be part of that. There may
- > also be side effects, such as uncontrolled rage.

Yes, I think so. Probably Talos actually carries out any operations Baldanders needs to carry out on himself — maybe even the surgical fitting of gills.

I like it when Severian shows himself to be as dumb as us and misidentifies master and servant.

Lee Berman — 20 Oct 2011, 01:38 · follows António Pedro Marques

Jeff Wilson: How is the analeptic use any worse than any other organ donation? Do you hold with Christian Science or Jehova's Witnesses?

As I see it the difference lies in that there is no consciousness in a liver or cornea. If a head transplant or brain transplant seems rather horrible, a partial version of that as alzado/autarch analeptic is, seems partly horrible.

When Severian discusses the topic with Ultan, he notes that Ultan gets a pretty disgusting look of greedy desire on his face in considering the possibility of eating the bodies of certain old masters and sharing their memories. I really don't think Wolfe intends this process to be considered a positive thing. Just like cloning, he explores the idea but within the context of horror. (and Wolfe openly owns to appreciating and having an intentional element of horror literature in many of his stories).

Jeff Wilson — 20 Oct 2011, 02:01 · in reply to Lee Berman

On Wed, October 19, 2011 20:38, Lee Berman wrote:

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If they are entered into freely, how are those horrible? It's not as if Severian suffers from his participation, quite the opposite. Appian gets less dead rather than more, and the predecessors also get to lend their wisdom a bit longer.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< http://www.tamut.edu/cil >

David Stockhoff — 20 Oct 2011, 02:13 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/19/2011 10:01 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Wed, October 19, 2011 20:38, Lee Berman wrote:

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From that perspective, it's no different from getting scanned and uploaded. A little scary, maybe an ethical question or two, but you do it because the alternative is worse.

But that's almost a trip to the dentist in comparison. We're discussing cannibalism in the form of a mock Last Supper. I submit that there are other, formal considerations here that are higher than choice and self-determination.

Jeff Wilson — 20 Oct 2011, 02:42 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 10/19/2011 9:13 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 10/19/2011 10:01 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On Wed, October 19, 2011 20:38, Lee Berman wrote:

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Like saving the world and preventing the extinction of the human race?

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com

Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana

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

David Stockhoff — 20 Oct 2011, 11:19 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 10/19/2011 10:42 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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Like saving the world and preventing the extinction of the human race?

No, that's not at all relevant to the point.

Lee Berman — 20 Oct 2011, 13:48 · follows David Stockhoff

Jeff Wilson: From that perspective, it's no different from getting scanned and uploaded. A little scary, maybe an ethical question or two, but you do it because the alternative is worse.

David Stockhoff: But that's almost a trip to the dentist in comparison. We're discussing cannibalism in the form of a mock Last Supper. I submit that there are other, formal considerations here that are higher than choice and self-determination.

Jeff Wilson: Like saving the world and preventing the extinction of the human race?

It isn't a idea which personally bothers me so much but I still get the impression Wolfe himself is bothered. Adding to the Mr. Million and Typhon examples of the horror aspect of one's consciousness being transferred to another body, I'll add Lemur's and the other Ayuntamiento members' situation in Long Sun. Surely all these are presented as horror, though the process was voluntary and even desired and by command. Are there other examples from other stories?

I agree with Jeff that as Severian is becoming Autarch it is presented as a positive thing (the "scarlet ruin" of the old autarch's face aside). After four books of being a wandering vagrant, Severian gets some power and luxury. He saves the memories and provides a version of eternal life for all those previous autarchs. Life is good!

I just get the impression that in the broader picture of Wolfe's work, eternal (material) life is not to be considered a good thing be it via cloning or robot existence or whatever. Seeking it and achieving it inevitably lead to horror and misery.

I question whether Severian's autarchal status is directly necessary for his New Sun status. In my view, the Hiero-types set up the New Sun quest for an autarch because they knew Severian would be the autarch. The old autarch (and Ymar) fail not because they really failed a test but simply because they weren't Severian.

It's been noted that, at minimum, the Hiero-types allowed Severian to participate in his brain-feasts, so how could they be bad? In my view they allow a lot of bad things to happen because stopping them, enforcing human-level morality, is not their goal (a parallel to Earth's Judeo-Christian God).

Trying to grasp the "moral of the story" I see Wolfe's model being that humanity is being forged. We can label the hammer as evil because it hits us, and the anvil as good because it supports us but they both play an equal role in shaping us.

I think Wolfe uses divine beauty and horror in this story to provide us a way to distinguish good from evil. We are SUPPOSED to choose good. But if we attempt to escape our humanity for a moment and try to consider the universe from God's point of view we can sort of understand the necessity of evil, even if we are always supposed to choose against it.

Lee Berman — 21 Oct 2011, 03:20 · follows Lee Berman

I had recently suggested that I thought Wolfe found Severian's meal of the old Autarch's brain to be as diabolical as the Thecla meal and some other examples of consciousness trading in Wolfe stories.

However I just found a previously unnoticed Wolfe quote which gainsays that idea:

James Jordan: Now the climax of that inversion seems to be when Severian actually eats the brains of the preceding autarch. Did you see that as another form of the diabolical communion? Or something that was necessary? It seems to be necessary to the novel.

Gene Wolfe: What I was doing was to say that in order to be a good ruler you must be familiar with the tradition of that rule---of that country and of the people in the past who have administered that rule. No, not diabolical in that case. The diabolical thing is more Vodalus and the graverobbers.

James Jordan: Who are into it just for thrills.

Gene Wolfe: Well, yes they are doing it for trivial reasons. Evil is always a distortion or an exaggeration of something that is good. People don't understand that now.

I'm not sure if this requires a revamping of my BotNS theory. On the other hand,

Wolfe's last sentence here fits perfectly with it.

Bart Everson — 22 Oct 2011, 03:47 · in reply to Marc Aramini

For what it's worth (not much in my opinion) *The Circus of Dr. Lao* was made into a film, released in 1964, called *7 Faces of Dr. Lao*, starring Tony Randall of all people. A very loose adaptation, and not at all successful in my opinion, though some people seem to like it. You can get it on Netflix etc.

Editor B

Craig Brewer — 22 Oct 2011, 03:50 · in reply to Bart Everson

It also got referred to a number of times on Mystery Science Theater 3000... :)

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Editor B

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 22 Oct 2011, 16:54 · in reply to Bart Everson

Bart Everson wrote:

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A good film but a lousy adaptation. IMO.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes