

Claw = Fang?

The Urth list — 58 messages, 14 voices, 02 Nov 2012

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6303>

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the badger — 02 Nov 2012, 00:04

It occurred to me that the Claw as a physical artifact bears some resemblance to a fang - I'm thinking specifically of a serpent's fang. Which naturally suggests the depiction of Satan as a serpent, the Garden of Eden etc ... as far as I can see this doesn't really fit into the theology/symbology of the BotNS but it's curious if you think about it - has anyone else pursued this line?

Gerry Quinn — 02 Nov 2012, 00:18 · in reply to the badger

From: the badger

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Interesting thought. I haven't heard of it.

Of course the Claw is really a thorn. I don't know that that has any significance.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 02 Nov 2012, 00:23 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

Thorns might be considered to resemble claws more than fangs. But Severian's blood the Claw sheds is perhaps more important than the Claw itself.

It seems like a stretch, but "nature red in tooth and claw" could connect it to a fang. But why do so?

On 11/1/2012 8:18 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

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Thomas Bitterman — 02 Nov 2012, 00:27 · in reply to David Stockhoff

It's not just a reference to the Crown of Thorns?

On Thu, Nov 1, 2012 at 8:23 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
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the badger — 02 Nov 2012, 00:31 · in reply to Thomas Bitterman

Considering all of this, is there is any tie-in with the Claw/thorn and Rosicrucianism (see
http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosy_Cross)

David Stockhoff — 02 Nov 2012, 00:40 · in reply to Thomas Bitterman

Probably.

On 11/1/2012 8:27 PM, Thomas Bitterman wrote:
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On Thu, Nov 1, 2012 at 8:23 PM, David Stockhoff
<dstockhoff at verizon.net <mailto:dstockhoff at verizon.net>> wrote:

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Jeff Wilson — 03 Nov 2012, 01:30 · in reply to the badger

On 11/1/2012 7:04 PM, the badger wrote:

It occurred to me that the Claw as a physical artifact bears some resemblance to a fang - I'm thinking specifically of a serpent's fang. Which naturally suggests the depiction of Satan as a serpent, the Garden of Eden etc

Why would a fang suggest a serpent more than any other fanged animal?

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

the badger — 03 Nov 2012, 01:48 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

I think it's the tie-in with the book of Genesis.

Jeff Wilson — 03 Nov 2012, 02:52 · in reply to the badger

On 11/2/2012 8:48 PM, the badger wrote:
I think it's the tie-in with the book of Genesis.

If you're responding to my question about fanged animals, what is the claw/thorn's tie-in with the book of Genesis?

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
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Ryan Dunn — 03 Nov 2012, 03:56 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Agree. I favor thorn as crown of thorns if we are going biblical. Not buying the fang parallel personally.

...ryan

Sent from my iPhone

On Nov 2, 2012, at 10:52 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:
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Bill Burgess — 21 Nov 2012, 23:36 · follows Ryan Dunn

Remembering, with Severian, that symbols create knowledge and human stories, rather than the other way around, here are some things I thought of when reading your question.

In the Eden story four entities are cursed, the serpent, the woman, the man, and the ground/dust.

The serpent's curse is that he will crawl on the ground and eat dust and that its seed will be enemies of the woman's seed. The woman's descendants will smash the head of serpents because serpents bite their heels.

The woman's curse is that whatever physical pleasure she may have in procreation, only she will bear the incredible pain and risk of it. Her husband will only experience the pleasure of it, while he rules over her.

The man's curse is identical with the curse of the ground. The dust is cursed to bring forth thorns, and the man is cursed to extract his (and the woman's) food painfully from thorn filled fields. For all the days of his life, until he returns to that cursed and thorn filled dust from which he came.

The dust of the ground is cursed with serpents fangs and thorns. And the dust of ground is the origin and destiny of humanity.

This is in the book of Genesis. In the book of Exodus the Israelites are plagued with serpents and as a remedy Moses makes an image of a serpent and lifts it on a staff for all to see and be cured of the venomous bites. So the symbol of the curse here becomes also the symbol of its cure.

So, Christian symbolism builds on this by making by making the complete humiliation of Jesus, which culminates in a crown of thorns, as he is lifted up on the cross, the very cure for the curse of humanity. And certainly the crucifixion is the Christian fulfillment of the curse where the seed of the woman's heel is bitten but he smashes the head of the serpent. But again, this very curse is also the cure.

One other Biblical mention, Paul says that he is given a thorn in the flesh (remember the flesh is the dust of the ground), and this thorn is a messenger of Satan, (the serpent), and when he asks God to remove it, God tells him it is actually there for God's purposes, because the weakness this thorn brings is also the source of his strength. So again, the curse is the cure.

It seems impossible to me to see any use of a thorn as a symbol without seeing an allusion also to the fangs of the serpent.

the badger — 22 Nov 2012, 00:01 · in reply to Bill Burgess

Thank you for your very thoughtful reply. The only thing I could add is that a serpent's fang carries deadly poison, while the Claw heals.

The funny thing is that before I read the books, when I only knew the titles and general outline, I assumed the Claw was a stylized cross, because a cross can resemble the talon of a bird - that's what I thought the Claw was.

Date: Wed, 21 Nov 2012 15:36:44 -0800

From: whburth at gmail.com

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Subject: (urth) Claw = Fang?

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David Stockhoff — 22 Nov 2012, 13:25 · in reply to Bill Burgess

Very well thought out! If the thorn is the key to the meaning of the Claw, and fangs do seem to occupy a space adjacent to thorns, they are therefore a link to the Claw.

It occurs to me that the Claw is not associated with any animal, even by speculation. One thinks of a bird, especially a bird of prey, but this is not supported at all. Serpents, of course, are one animal that can't have a claw. But lizards do (and dragons). There seems to be a complementarity among these symbols that only Genesis can unlock.

On 11/21/2012 6:36 PM, Bill Burgess wrote:

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Jerry Friedman — 22 Nov 2012, 20:49 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>

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In fact it's rejected.

"(Because the Conciliator is given a Claw, one is tempted to make the easy association of the eagle of Jove with the sun; it is perhaps too pat.)"

CotC, Appendix

Jerry Friedman

David Stockhoff — 22 Nov 2012, 21:54 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

On 11/22/2012 3:49 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

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Yes, of course. "Perhaps too pat" indeed. It all but instructs us to look elsewhere, doesn't it? Away from the pagan and toward Genesis, maybe.

Daniel Petersen — 23 Nov 2012, 00:04 · in reply to David Stockhoff

From a conversation a few years ago with a theologian who knew the original languages of the Bible, I gather that Satan may have been in the angelic order of a seraph and a seraph is in the form of a winged serpent (dragon).

Thus, the serpent cursed to crawl on his belly is a de-winged dragon. But it doesn't sound like there are claws to speak of on these flying-serpent 'dragons'. But Satan is referred to as a dragon in the book of Revelation in the New Testament and that depiction sounds to me somehow more like the traditional dragon we usually think of - i.e. with legs... and claws. So perhaps by this route you have your Genesis-based dragon claw.

But like Jesus lifted up just as the bronze serpent was lifted up in the desert to heal the Israelites, and like Jesus wore a crown of thorns just as man is cursed to work the thorny ground for food, so too Jesus could be said to have suffered the dragon's claw on the cross in order to free mankind from the grip of that very claw.

One more thing: lions have claws and both Satan and Jesus are likened to a lion in the New Testament. The Claw, then, seems to draw consistently on images that are biblically employed for both curse/evil/satan and blessing/good/messiah. And I think the Claw's symbolism mingles these two opposed uses to simultaneously represent the ironic defeat of the former and the subversive triumph of the latter... (I think this ties in well with elements of the theology of the Outsider also.)

-DOJP

On Thu, Nov 22, 2012 at 9:54 PM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

On 11/22/2012 3:49 PM, Jerry Friedman wrote:

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the badger — 23 Nov 2012, 01:30 · in reply to Bill Burgess

Sorry for my ignorance on this topic, but is there any evidence that the Claw is of extraterrestrial origin - either an artifact, natural object or part of an animal? Or could it have been manufactured on Urth during an earlier and more technologically advanced era?

Bailey Swartz — 23 Nov 2012, 04:49 · in reply to the badger

If you believe Severian, it came from a bush. It may have been alien like the Avern.

On Nov 22, 2012 6:30 PM, "the badger" <viconian at hotmail.com> wrote:
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Bailey Swartz — 23 Nov 2012, 04:51 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Hardly refuted, that is written in the context of a speculative scholar, just the same as how we speculate.

On Nov 22, 2012 1:49 PM, "Jerry Friedman" <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:
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the badger — 23 Nov 2012, 06:30 · in reply to Bailey Swartz

I was also thinking of which Hebrew letter might visually resemble a claw ... maybe Gimel? This letter seems to be associated with reward and punishment ...

Bill Burgess — 23 Nov 2012, 07:04 · in reply to Bailey Swartz

We have to keep Wolfe's penchant for irony in mind as well. Of course it is too easy and pat, he tells us with a wink and a nod, because he's flat out giving us this one. When he created the claw as part of the narrative he was thinking precisely of the eagle of Jove.

Of course when someone uses irony as much as Wolfe does, it's always debatable whether or not that is what he is doing. When I re-read him, I always find more irony. For example a few days ago I was reading parts of Shadow again and came to Severian's mention of how that long ago women were members of the torturers guild as well but Ymar the Almost Just noticed how cruel they were and how often they exceeded the proscribed punishments and decreed that they could be members no more. Immediately I understood what I hadn't before, that this was irony, and in fact we are to understand not only that the opposite was true, i.e. that women were not cruel enough and were too lenient, but that this traditional lie is told so as to serve multiple functions, one of which is to help keep the brothers unattached to women.

On Thu, Nov 22, 2012 at 8:51 PM, Bailey Swartz <bsswartz at gmail.com> wrote:

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Lee Berman — 23 Nov 2012, 16:20 · follows Bill Burgess

The animal vs. plant origin of the Claw is left open for most of the story. In the end (of Citadel) Severian could have found a claw from an animal carcass on the beach but instead, Wolfe comes out in favor of a plant origin. (perhaps Marc Aramini will appreciate this?)

Ignoring anthropology, an early dichotomy of plant products vs. animal products is found in the story of

Cain and Abel, with (the paternal) Jewish God favoring Abel's animal sacrifice over Cain's grain.

An apt
parable for ancient shepherdic Hebrews, being mindful that the ancient enemies of the Hebrews
were more
agricultural.

Getting back to anthropology, we can understand the historic association of males and male
gods with
meat while women and female gods are more associated with plant products. The Viron naming
convention is
based on this, of course.

There is a nod or two toward vegetarianism in BotNS. Though Severian is not a vegetarian, he
seems to
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projecting since that is how I feel about vegetarianism; I admire it but haven't achieved it.)

Vegetarianism is associated with various pagan religious beliefs, like Wicca. It is an association
with
the female-centric tendencies of these pagan religions. Not that these religions exclude males
but they
tend to be biased toward the female as a balance against the highly patrifocal
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I disagree that the message in Wolfe's books is to dismiss paganism as false religion in favor of
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Christian forms of belief. As Wolfe says in the James Jordan interview, he, himself, feels that
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and death, rather than sex and fertility).

I think Wolfe sees the relationship of pagan gods to the Judeo-Christian beliefs as similar to
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we see in the transition from Long Sun to Short Sun. If the gods can be envisioned as cards then
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changing world will necessitate a shuffling and redealing of the cards in new combinations.
Thus blind
Tartaros and piggish Phaea become combined in the godling named Pig. Pas and Scylla etc. are
similarly
shuffled and recombined.

I think Wolfe sees something similar in the progression of gods (on Urth and Earth). As we have
discussed previously on this board, there are pagan trinities which pre-sage the Christian
Trinity. The confused father-son relationship in the Dionysus-> Zeus/Jove->Dionysus->Jehovah
progression is to me similar to the Typhon/Pas->Silk->Horn->Outsider progression.

With regard to an alien origin of the Claw, I actually lean in favor of it, in a certain sense. The
Claw
was created by the thorn being drenched in Severian's blood. And I find many hints that

Severian and his powers and special (god-like) qualities derive from a partial-alien (demi-god) ancestry. This in parallel to the Greek heroes like Heracles and Oedipus, whose stories Severian's tends to mimic.

How that blood-drenched thorn becomes encased in sapphire is not revealed but I think we can safely attribute that to the Pelerines. As the witches represent the wild, Wiccan pagan side of things, the Pelerines are pretty Christian and nun-like. And the ancient Christians were quite into making preserved relics from the remnants of holy guys.

David Stockhoff — 23 Nov 2012, 18:31 · in reply to Lee Berman

That's good context for this interpretation of the Claw. And the below snippet is perhaps especially suggestive, because it involves or invokes the combination of plant and animal into something higher.

On 11/23/2012 11:20 AM, Lee Berman wrote:

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David Stockhoff — 23 Nov 2012, 18:38 · in reply to Bailey Swartz

I think it's meant along the lines of a classic cultic double meaning: one esoteric (Jove's eagle) and one esoteric (the clawed serpent). These two meanings balance perfectly, since one is associated with a civic/daylight religion and the other with a mysterious/gnostic, even satanic one.

Rejecting one points to the other but also back to itself.

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the badger — 24 Nov 2012, 04:18 · in reply to Lee Berman

This is a minor point but I noticed towards the beginning of *Shadow*, during the Feast of Holy Katherine, at the climax of the ceremony the torturer's wheel appears to be covered with serpents which turn into roses (it's all an effect created by colored paper, as Severian notes).

On Nov 23, 2012, at 11:20 AM, "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

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I think Wolfe sees something similar in the progression of gods (on Urth and Earth). As we have discussed previously on this board, there are pagan trinities which pre-sage the Christian Trinity. The confused father-son relationship in the Dionysus-> Zeus/Jove->Dionysus->Jehovah progression is to me similar to the Typhon/Pas->Silk->Horn->Outsider progression.

With regard to an alien origin of the Claw, I actually lean in favor of it, in a certain sense. The Claw was created by the thorn being drenched in Severian's blood. And I find many hints that Severian and his powers and special (god-like) qualities derive from a partial-alien (demi-god) ancestry. This in parallel to the Greek heroes like Heracles and Oedipus, whose stories Severian's tends to mimic.

How that blood-drenched thorn becomes encased in sapphire is not revealed but I think we can safely attribute that to the Pelerines. As the witches represent the wild, Wiccan pagan side of things, the Pelerines are pretty Christian and nun-like. And the ancient Christians were quite into making preserved relics from the remnants of holy guys.

Jerry Friedman — 24 Nov 2012, 20:31 · in reply to Bailey Swartz

On Nov 22, 2012 1:49 PM, "Jerry Friedman" <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com> wrote:

From: David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net>

...

It occurs to me that the Claw is not associated with any animal, even by speculation. One thinks of a bird, especially a bird of prey, but this is not supported at all.

...

In fact it's rejected.

"(Because the Conciliator is given a Claw, one is tempted to make the easy association of the eagle of Jove with the sun; it is perhaps too pat.)"

CotC, Appendix

From: Bailey Swartz <bsswartz at gmail.com>

Hardly refuted, that is written in the context of a speculative scholar, just the same as how we speculate.

Yes, rejected but not refuted. ?Even bringing something up with a negative is bringing it up. ?

I know the eagle of Jove only from the myth of Ganymede, a variation--maybe a homoerotically distorted variation--on the theme of divine salvation.

Jerry Friedman

Jeff Wilson — 25 Nov 2012, 00:33 · in reply to the badger

On 11/23/2012 10:18 PM, the badger wrote:

This is a minor point but I noticed towards the beginning of Shadow, during the Feast of Holy Katherine, at the climax of the ceremony the torturer's wheel appears to be covered with serpents

which turn into roses (it's all an effect created by colored paper, as Severian notes).

Good show locating this textev, Badger!

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

David Stockhoff — 26 Nov 2012, 03:24 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 11/24/2012 7:33 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 11/23/2012 10:18 PM, the badger wrote:

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Good show locating this textev, Badger!

You have to wonder how far to take this.

If a rose is one of Severian's symbols, and a serpent is not, then what does that mean? Is the thorn of the field at least an honest adversary, encountered while toiling, and the rose the best of all the thorns? Was Typhon a serpent?

Is this opposition played out again by the Neighbors and the inhumi?

Jeff Wilson — 26 Nov 2012, 09:39 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 11/25/2012 9:24 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 11/24/2012 7:33 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 11/23/2012 10:18 PM, the badger wrote:

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Typhon absolutely plays the serpent's part when he shows Sev all the countries of Urth and offers him dominion over them in return for his oath of fealty.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at clueland.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
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David Stockhoff — 26 Nov 2012, 13:08 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

Typhon was certainly THE Serpent, but was he A serpent?

Is Severian something like the thorn of the field raised up to the degree that Typhon/Satan is a raised-up serpent of the field? i.e., the better counterpart to him? Are the two of them hammer

and anvil in shaping a more morally advanced humanity?

I'm just spitballing.

On 11/26/2012 4:39 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 11/25/2012 9:24 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

On 11/24/2012 7:33 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 11/23/2012 10:18 PM, the badger wrote:

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Typhon absolutely plays the serpent's part when he shows Sev all the countries of Urth and offers him dominion over them in return for his oath of fealty.

Lee Berman — 26 Nov 2012, 13:18 · follows David Stockhoff

Jerry Friedman: Yes, rejected but not refuted. Even bringing something up with a negative is bringing it up.

Completely agreed. (e.g. Severian's unprompted denial of pedophilia is the only reason we might think it happened.)

the badger: at the climax of the ceremony the torturer's wheel appears to be covered with serpents which turn into roses

David Stockhoff: If a rose is one of Severian's symbols, and a serpent is not, then what does that mean? Was Typhon a serpent?

This is the direction of my interpretation also. Typhon was the worst sort of ruler and Severian will become the best sort (willing to ban torture, anyway).

The Green Man is a similar amalgam of animal turned plant (and perhaps man and woman), foretelling of a better future.

Lee Berman — 26 Nov 2012, 15:51 · follows Lee Berman

David Stockhoff: Typhon was certainly THE Serpent, but was he A serpent?

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I'm just spitballing.

Spitballing may be what we are limited to in a story which jumbles Theseus with the Monitor and Merrimac and Mowgli with Romulus and Remus and Squanto.

As I see it, mythological Typhon was a potentially world-destroying mandragon, partially composed of snakes. His wife was Echidna, a cave-dwelling snake woman whose myth is in a direct line to the Roman Cumaeen Sybil who is known as one of the earliest harbingers of Jesus Christ. This all gets jumbled into BotNS, tossing Alexander and others into the mix as well.

FWIW, in Long Sun, Quetzal the inhum, tells Remora (fishy stowaway, also an inhum?) this story:

"A-man and Wo-man like rabbits in a garden. The--what do you call them?...The cobra persuaded Wo-man to eat fruit from his tree, miraculous fruit whose taste conferred wisdom...It is all in the Writings. Or nearly all. A god called Ah Lah barred Wo-man and her husband from the garden...We seem to have lost sight of Ah Lah, by the way. I can't recall a single sacrifice to him. No one ever asks why the cobra wanted Wo-man to eat his fruit...In order that she would climb this tree, Patera. The man likewise. Their story's not over because they haven't climbed down."

So, in this Eden story we have a plant (tree) and serpent as featured players. Somehow related to the

Claw of the Conciliator? This story certainly presages Green, a planet of trees and parasitic reptilian

beings. What might Wolfe's cryptic note to Marc, "GREEN is Urth" mean in an Edenic context?

Dr. Talos' play also features the Eden story and the serpent appears to be represented by a fanged, busty,

red-haired demoness named Jahi. Then in Short Sun we have an inhum named Jahlee.

Somehow it all has

to be related but perhaps we were never meant to connect it all in a coherent, structured fashion.

Perhaps, as David suggests, intuitive mythological spitballing is all Wolfe intended us to grasp from

these connections.

Bill Burgess — 26 Nov 2012, 20:30 · in reply to Lee Berman

Now that you mention Quetzal.

This reminds me of Quetzacoatl, the Aztec flying serpent god.

who was some derivation of the central myth of the Aztec which involved an eagle with a serpent in its talons and is on the Mexican flag. We've already been told by Wolfe to view the claw as something like the talons of the eagle of Jove, so he clearly links talons and fangs in his mythologies. Also, in the Bible, Seraphim are flying fiery serpents and angelic beings.

On Mon, Nov 26, 2012 at 7:51 AM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

David Stockhoff: Typhon was certainly THE Serpent, but was he A serpent?

Is Severian something like the thorn of the field raised up to the degree that Typhon/Satan is a raised-up serpent of the field? i.e., the better counterpart to him? Are the two of them hammer and anvil in shaping a more morally advanced humanity?

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coherent, structured fashion.
Perhaps, as David suggests, intuitive mythological spitballing is all
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these connections.

Jeff Wilson — 26 Nov 2012, 20:37 · in reply to Bill Burgess

On 11/26/2012 2:30 PM, Bill Burgess wrote:
Now that you mention Quetzal.
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who was some derivation of the central myth of the aztec which involved
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his mythologies.
Also, in the Bible, Seraphim are flying fiery serpents and angelic beings.

I don't think seraphim are affirmatively both angelic and serpentine in the canonical books.

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

Daniel Petersen — 26 Nov 2012, 21:08 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

I don't think seraphim are affirmatively both angelic and serpentine in the canonical books.

Jeff Wilson

For what it's worth:

- 1) serpent, fiery serpent
- 1a) poisonous serpent (fiery from burning effect of poison)
- 2) seraph, seraphim
- 2a) majestic beings with 6 wings, human hands or voices in attendance upon God
- ?Brown-Driver-Briggs (Old Testament Hebrew-English Lexicon)

>From H8313; burning, that is, (figuratively) poisonous (serpent); specifically a saraph or symbolical creature (from their copper color): fiery (serpent), seraph.
?Strong's (Hebrew & Chaldee Dictionary of the Old Testament)

<http://lexiconcordance.com/hebrew/8314.html>

-DOJP

On Mon, Nov 26, 2012 at 8:37 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:

On 11/26/2012 2:30 PM, Bill Burgess wrote:

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Jeff Wilson — 26 Nov 2012, 21:39 · in reply to Daniel Petersen

On 11/26/2012 3:08 PM, Daniel Petersen wrote:

From H8313; burning, that is, (figuratively) poisonous (serpent); specifically a saraph or symbolical creature (from their copper color): fiery (serpent), seraph.

Yes, but when the word is used for multi-winged angels "burning ones" is more literal, because one tests a prophet with a hot coal, IIRC.

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Nov 2012, 21:40 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

I've never heard of this test -- one prophet was asked to put a hot coal into his mouth which then became The Word Of The Lord for him to speak. That's about it.

On Mon, Nov 26, 2012 at 1:39 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:

On 11/26/2012 3:08 PM, Daniel Petersen wrote:

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**

Daniel Petersen — 26 Nov 2012, 22:12 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

My point is that seraph means serpent and there's nothing in the Biblical text that I'm aware of that tries to distance that snake-like image from the angelic beings themselves. As I said before, one trained theologian knowledgeable of the original languages that I spoke too said he pictured them as winged dragons of a sort. Hence, Satan being a more or less de-winged dragon in Revelation. (And this making all serpentine/clawed images in Wolfe simultaneously resonant of both the angelic and demonic, the divine and the diabolical - appropriately, as both Jesus and Satan are imaged as a lion in the New Testament.) The Solar Cycle's soteriology reflects the N.T. in seeing salvation as a divine incarnation into the very symbols of evil (originally good in themselves) in order to redeem them back to their right place. E.g. 'claw' is a thing of tearing and death in a fallen world but becomes, in the Conciliator, a thing of healing.

Observe one of my favourite theological passages in BotNS:

'What I was going to tell you was that the existence of that relic seems to have given some people the idea that the Conciliator used claws as weapons.

I have sometimes doubted that he existed; but if such a person ever lived, I'm sure that he used his weapons largely against himself. Do you understand what I am saying?' (p. 173 in the Fantasy Masterworks version of Sword and Citadel)

This is why the gem's touch earlier in the book can be described as the 'kiss of the claw'. In the paragraph following the one above, the contrast is given: some use 'claws of steel' as a 'charm against the coming of the New Sun'. Such people 'must want to hold back the coming of the New Sun so they can take his place and perhaps usurp his powers.' As with many such theologically revealing passages, it is cut short mid-sentence and not returned to.

At any rate, the former quote is the messianic sense of the Claw (self-sacrifice) and the latter is the satanic or antichrist sense of the Claw (violent tyranny). Biblically, both may be related to serpents/dragons/lions. There is no inherently evil beast in the biblical ecosphere, but rather they symbol forth both good and evil according to context.

-DOJP

On Mon, Nov 26, 2012 at 9:39 PM, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:

On 11/26/2012 3:08 PM, Daniel Petersen wrote:

From H8313; burning, that is, (figuratively) poisonous (serpent); specifically a saraph or symbolical creature (from their copper color): fiery (serpent), seraph.

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the badger — 26 Nov 2012, 22:15 · in reply to Daniel Petersen

When I started this thread I was thinking about the pairing of a rose thorn and a serpent's fang ... clearly a lion's fang must also be added to the cluster.

Date: Mon, 26 Nov 2012 22:12:03 +0000
From: danielottojackpetersen at gmail.com
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Subject: Re: (urth) Claw = Fang?

My point is that seraph means serpent and there's nothing in the Biblical text that I'm aware of that tries to distance that snake-like image from the angelic beings themselves. As I said before, one trained theologian knowledgeable of the original languages that I spoke too said he pictured them as winged dragons of a sort. Hence, Satan being a more or less de-winged dragon in Revelation. (And this making all serpentine/clawed images in Wolfe simultaneously resonant of both the angelic and demonic, the divine and the diabolical - appropriately, as both Jesus and Satan are imaged as a lion in the New Testament.) The Solar Cycle's soteriology reflects the N.T. in seeing salvation as a divine incarnation into the very symbols of evil (originally good in themselves) in order to redeem them back to their right place. E.g. 'claw' is a thing of tearing and death in a fallen world but becomes, in the Conciliator, a thing of healing.

David Stockhoff — 27 Nov 2012, 00:18 · in reply to Daniel Petersen

Interesting in this context that a venomous fang may be used to produce its own antidote (by injection into horses).

The origin of the Rod of Asclepius was discussed here some time ago, and it has nothing to do with snakes. But still ...

On 11/26/2012 5:12 PM, Daniel Petersen wrote:
E.g. 'claw' is a thing of tearing and death in a fallen world but becomes, in the Conciliator, a thing of healing.

Jeff Wilson — 27 Nov 2012, 04:45 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On 11/26/2012 3:40 PM, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:
I've never heard of this test -- one prophet was asked to put a hot coal into his mouth which then became The Word Of The Lord for him to speak.
That's about it.

Isaiah 6: "6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.' "

Lee Berman — 27 Nov 2012, 13:56 · follows Jeff Wilson

Daniel Petersen: And this making all serpentine/clawed images in Wolfe simultaneously resonant of both the angelic and demonic, the divine and the diabolical - appropriately, as both Jesus and Satan are imaged as a lion in the New Testament.)

This brings to mind Severian's revelation on Tzadkiel's ship that the unquestionably angelic Barbatus and Famulimus have a watery, "kelpie"- like origin, connecting them to the giant sea beings back on Urth, one of whom has the demonic name Ariocho.

Angelic Tzadkiel also displays this connection with his/her self-described association with a sponge and the ability to pinch off smaller, human-shaped avatars in similar fashion to Scylla, The Mother and (likely) Abaia.

Good and evil, the divine hammer and tongs which forge us, yes? Still, between such awesomely superhuman shaping tools, I'm not sure I see where room for free will exists, except as a self-POV.

Daniel Petersen — 27 Nov 2012, 13:57 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
Interesting in this context that a venomous fang may be used to produce its own antidote (by injection into horses).

I'm also reminded that Jesus said he would be lifted up on the cross just as Moses lifted up the bronze *serpent* in the desert, so that all who looked toward it would be healed of their fiery snake bite. So, as it turns out, Jesus became a seraph on the cross (so to speak), taking the enemy's own form in order to redeem all things (including that serpentine form itself - the prophet Isaiah says a little child will be able to reach into the cobra's hole in the new creation and not be harmed - i.e. snakes persist even in the resurrected renewed creation of the Eschaton).

Very Wolfean. (That is, Wolfe's work is deeply imbued with the Bible's sense of soteriological irony and paradox.)

The Claw, then, is perhaps a thorn, which can perhaps resonate with a serpent's fang (I forget just why this was proposed), all of which imagery may (biblically) symbolise initially the fall and subsequently salvation.

-DOJP

On Tue, Nov 27, 2012 at 12:18 AM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
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The origin of the Rod of Asclepius was discussed here some time ago, and it has nothing to do with snakes. But still ...

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Lee Berman — 27 Nov 2012, 14:19 · follows Daniel Petersen

Jeff Wilson: Isaiah 6: "6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.' "

When Moses was a baby in Pharaoh's court, he was offered the choice of a gold bowl vs. a bowl of hot coals to see if he was a danger to the throne. An angel guided his hand to the hot coals and he ended up burning his tongue and receiving a life-long speech impediment as a result.

Seems like there must be a connection to these stories.

Daniel Petersen — 27 Nov 2012, 14:21 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

Good and evil, the divine hammer and tongs which forge us, yes? Still, between such awesomely superhuman shaping tools, I'm not sure I see where room for free will exists, except as a self-POV.

If I believed we were between those hammer and tongs, I'm not sure I'd believe in the existence of freewill either, Lee. But I don't believe that nor do I think it's evinced in Wolfe. My point in bringing up the fact that both the New Testament and Wolfe often use a single image to symbolise both good and evil (e.g. lion), as indicated by context, was emphatically **not** to aver that either or both thereby proclaim some kind of dualism. Far from it.

Both hammer and tongs (if we must think of it that way) would only be good, for only good has enough substance to be such hard shaping tools - whereas evil is always parasitic, a tending towards nothingness (I think that conception's fairly Augustinian and Lewisian and it's surely not too crazy a stretch to think Wolfe may hold to something similar). So the evil that is symbolised by claws, fangs, thorns in Wolfe would be all that tends toward the dissolution and disintegration of the characters, their societies, and their environments - in all three Books. The good symbolised by these is always those forces of compassion, truth, justice and so on that tend toward healing, reversal, renewal of all that bends toward nothingness. (Think about the major narrative arcs of each of the Books for a moment and consider whether that doesn't well encapsulate the moral universe of the tales.)

The freedom of creatures to bend with good's healing integration or, conversely (and perversely), to bend against that good in the direction of evil's disintegrating non-creative force seems plausible (and urgent) to me in Wolfe. His characters are not just inert objects being shaped by opposing forces. They are **imago Dei** creatures of inherent goodness (think of the way Silk views even the 'worst') being called to 'go with the flow' of that goodness rather than flowing in the opposite direction.

That's libertarian freewill to me, not some pretend 'freedom' that must be what it is by eternal decree (hammer and tongs style) even though it can subjectively feel as if it's making it's own choices because that makes life psychologically bearable.

-DOJP

On Tue, Nov 27, 2012 at 1:56 PM, Lee Berman <severiansola at hotmail.com> wrote:

Daniel Petersen: And this making all serpentine/clawed images in Wolfe simultaneously resonant of both the angelic and demonic,

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Speaking of visions (sort of), I encountered the following description of a "prototypical" hallucinatory (DMT) experience in Sam Harris' response to the new book "Proof of Heaven" and found some parts to be quite familiar (note the date):

Under the influence of DMT, the world becomes an Arabian labyrinth, a palace, a more than possible Martian jewel, vast with motifs that flood the gaping mind with complex and wordless awe. Color and the sense of a reality-unlocking secret nearby pervade the experience. There is a sense of other times, and of one's own infancy, and of wonder, wonder and more wonder. It is an audience with the alien nuncio. In the midst of this experience, apparently at the end of human history, guarding gates that seem surely to open on the howling maelstrom of the unspeakable emptiness between the stars, is the Aeon.

The Aeon, as Heraclitus presciently observed, is a child at play with colored balls. Many diminutive beings are present there the tykes, the self-transforming machine elves of hyperspace. Are they the children destined to be father to the man? One has the impression of entering into an ecology of souls that lies beyond the portals of what we naively call death. I do not know. Are they the synesthetic embodiment of ourselves as the Other, or of the Other as ourselves? Are they the elves lost to us since the fading of the magic light of childhood? Here is a tremendum barely to be told, an epiphany beyond our wildest dreams. Here is the realm of that which is stranger than we /can/ suppose. Here is the mystery, alive, unscathed, still as new for us as when our ancestors lived it fifteen thousand summers ago. The tryptamine entities offer the gift of new language, they sing in pearly voices that rain down as colored petals and flow through the air like hot metal to become toys and such gifts as gods would give their children. The sense of emotional connection is terrifying and intense. The Mysteries revealed

are real and if ever fully told will leave no stone upon another in the small world we have gone so ill in.

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Lee Berman — 27 Nov 2012, 15:58 · follows Daniel Petersen

Daniel Petersen: The freedom of creatures to bend with good's healing integration or, conversely (and perversely), to bend against that good in the direction of evil's disintegrating non-creative force seems plausible (and urgent) to me in Wolfe. His characters are not just inert objects being shaped by opposing forces. They are **imago Dei** creatures of inherent goodness (think of the way Silk views even the 'worst') being called to 'go with the flow' of that goodness rather than flowing in the opposite direction. That's libertarian freewill to me, not some pretend 'freedom' that must be what it is by eternal decree (hammer and tongs style) even though it can subjectively feel as if it's making it's own choices because that makes life psychologically bearable.

Eloquently stated, as always Daniel. Trying to reinterpret your words in my own coarse fashion, I wonder if we can stretch the analogy to suggest that as metal being blacksmithed, we do have the choice to either be molded as intended by an intelligent and benignly purposed Creator or to reject the molding and accept existence as an errant, excised scrap of purposeless metal, perhaps useful only as recycled material for some future project.

Daniel Petersen — 27 Nov 2012, 16:16 · in reply to Lee Berman

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Yeah, I could probably go for something like that. That ability to choose is what makes all analogies break down. We're made of **living**, organic, deliberating, volitional 'metal' - the fires and anvils and hammers are certainly the limits of our freedom - but we play a part, however small.

In my opinion, at least (and I think Wolfe's fiction largely evinces this - though not without complication and density).

-DOJP

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David Stockhoff — 28 Nov 2012, 01:05 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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"Terence McKenna was the Magellan of psychedelic head space, and humanity's first ambassador to the hyperdimensional machine elves of the Eschaton."

One wonders what kind of trashy literature he had been reading.

David Stockhoff — 28 Nov 2012, 01:52 · in reply to David Duffy

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Yes, indeed. From his writing, he seems to have had enough of a classical education to "get" Wolfe's allusions. One must wonder.

I notice his Eschaton comes on December 21, 2012.

Daniel Petersen — 28 Nov 2012, 12:13 · in reply to David Stockhoff

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Daniel Petersen — 28 Nov 2012, 16:01 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Lafferty felt himself just slightly distinct from mere 'white': he said in an interview that he avoided being a WASP by the narrow margin of being instead a 'ruddy Irish Catholic' or something like that. I think he identified slightly more with the nation's 'minorities'. For what it's worth.

I find Wolfe's novella 'Hour of Trust' a fascinating self-conscious take on 60s/70s counterculture. The rest of that decade (70s) Wolfe was practically participating in and helping create aspects of said counterculture - but somewhere within it he seems to have went 'wait, what's this? interesting, let me document that and critique it somewhat'.

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Marc Aramini — 28 Nov 2012, 17:23 · in reply to Daniel Petersen

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-----Inline Attachment Follows-----

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