

Baldanders' dream

The Urth list — 12 messages, 4 voices, 19 Aug 2014

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6630>

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Marc Aramini — 19 Aug 2014, 13:14

We all know how sev's dream of the little boy with a sword fighting the wooden man with a cudgel parallels what happens in the story, including flooding and the breaking of terminus est in a fight with Baldanders, but Baldanders has a dream, too - of caverns below with stone teeth dripping blood - of arms dismembered found on sanded paths and shaking chains in the dark, and attributes this to Severian being next to him.

Sounds like what sleeps in the mines at saltus waking up. Perhaps Severian brings this thing to life, too.

Marc Aramini — 19 Aug 2014, 13:22 · follows Marc Aramini

Conversely, it could be an outsider's vision of the oubliette under the Matachin Tower, as well, though there seems to be mud rather than sand there.

Gerry Quinn — 19 Aug 2014, 13:26 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On 19/08/2014 14:14, Marc Aramini wrote:

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I'd interpret it as references to torture and state executions.

- Gerry Quinn

Lee — 20 Aug 2014, 12:47 · follows Gerry Quinn

Marc Aramini: but Baldanders has a dream, too - of caverns below with stone teeth dripping blood - of arms dismembered found on sanded paths and shaking chains in the dark, and attributes this to Severian being next to him.

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On first reading, the dream influence of Severian's past as a torturer would seem to be the likely inspiration for Baldanders' dream.

But given the futuristic nature of Severian's dream, Severian's future in the Saltus mine seems a more likely source. "Stone teeth" seem very allusive to stalagmites and stalactites. The "chains" may symbolize the servitude of the man-apes and of course Severian does quite a bit of arm dismemberment in his time there.

I think the gigantic presence beneath the mine has not been given its due attention. Most thoughts regarding the alien megatherian presence on Urth rightfully involve the water, given the focus on the giant eel-like Abaia and his aquatic undine daughter-brides, corroborated with "Great Scylla" in RttW.

But there is much cave imagery present in Urth's mythology also. There is the Ouroboros story in which people are ingested, mistaking its mouth for a cave. There is the mention of Jurupari, a monster with a cave-like mouth for its victims. Fomalhaut, the "mouth of the fish" is mentioned (by the Cumaeen). Then there is the cave of the Cumaeen, herself.

This cave hearkens to the cave dwelling of the Roman Cumaeen Sibyl while the snake-like nature of The Cumaeen ties her to the Pythian Oracle at Delphi. Snakes and cave-dwelling also hearken back to the "Mother of All Monsters", Typhon's wife, Echidna.

Though "Echidna" is not mentioned by name in BotNS, it would seem Wolfe thought "snake" and "cave dwelling" would be enough clues to tie the character of The Cumaeen to the wife of Typhon. Since few got the reference, Wolfe made sure the name Echidna was front and center in Long Sun.

Gerry Quinn — 20 Aug 2014, 21:07 · in reply to Lee

On 20/08/2014 13:47, Lee wrote:

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Echidna is, but the Cumaeen isn't, so it hardly ties the two characters. Snakes and caves do not an Echidna make - as you point out yourself, a mash-up of two Appolonian shrines is enough. Besides, she's not necessarily a snake:

"As I had suspected, the Cumaeen was not a woman at all; yet neither was she one of the horrors I had beheld in the gardens of the House Absolute. Something sleekly reptilian coiled about the glowing rod. I looked for the head but found none, though each of the patternings on the reptile's back was a face, and the eyes of each face seemed lost in rapture."

She shares no obvious personality characteristics with Echidna.

- Gerry Quinn

Lee — 21 Aug 2014, 16:20 · follows Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn: Echidna is, but the Cumaeen isn't, so it hardly ties the two characters. Snakes and caves do not an Echidna make.

I find them to be sufficiently linked. It is to be remembered that the Cumaeen is the leader of the Witches in BotNS. There is a constellation of traits including snakes, witchcraft and caves

which link such Greco-Roman female mythological characters as Echidna, Lamia, Hecate, the Pythian Oracle and the Cumaean Sibyl.

Besides, she's not necessarily a snake:

"Snake-like" or "snake-associated" would be more accurate descriptors. Mythological Echidna was not a "snake" but she had snakey attributes.

Anyway, anything "coiled", "reptilian" and without a distinct head is clearly going to be more "snake-like" than, say, "turtle-like", "elephant-like" or -like any other non-snake creature.

She shares no obvious personality characteristics with Echidna.

I'm not sure what "personality characteristics" you might be referring to. But, Echidna, in Long Sun, clearly has snakey attributes and was quite notably involved in an incident of human sacrifice.

The Cumaean also has snakey attributes and is associated with human sacrifice. (Hopefully the connection between human sacrifice and Apu Punchau doesn't need to be explained; The Cumaean's "s?ance" is not quite what it seems).

Typhon and Scylla from Long Sun are mentioned in BotNS (and Short Sun). Echidna is not mentioned in BotNS by name, but given the combination of cave-dwelling, snake association, witchcraft and human sacrifice, I think Wolfe has given us enough clues to find her in BotNS. Just my opinion, of course.

Jeffery Wilson clueland.com — 22 Aug 2014, 02:21 · in reply to Lee

On 8/21/2014 11:20 AM, Lee wrote:

Gerry Quinn: Echidna is, but the Cumaean isn't, so it hardly ties the two characters. Snakes and caves do not an Echidna make.

I find them to be sufficiently linked. It is to be remembered that the Cumaean

is the leader of the Witches in BotNS.

Is she? She's considered a witch, and Merryn is at her disposal in the Stone Town, but that's not the same.

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

Gerry Quinn — 22 Aug 2014, 10:59 · in reply to Lee

On 21/08/2014 17:20, Lee wrote:

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I find them to be sufficiently linked. It is to be remembered that the Cumaean is the leader of the Witches in BotNS. There is a constellation of traits including snakes, witchcraft and caves which link such Greco-Roman female mythological characters as Echidna, Lamia, Hecate, the Pythian Oracle and the Cumaean Sibyl.

Note the plural in "characters". It seems to bear out what I said; snakes and caves do not uniquely identify a character.

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Frankly, it does have to be explained - it is certainly not a direct link. In any case, human sacrifice was not unique to a single god in Long Sun.

As for personality characteristics, I mean things like the Cumaean's interest in witchcraft and archeology, and Echidna's rather prudish interest in the virginity of the priesthood, and her killing of Pas to preserve her rule over the Whorl. They don't seem at all like the same person.

Typhon and Scylla from Long Sun are mentioned in BotNS (and Short Sun). Echidna is not mentioned in BotNS by name, but given the combination of cave-dwelling, snake association, witchcraft and human sacrifice, I think Wolfe has given us enough clues to find her in BotNS. Just my opinion, of course.

It would take a lot more in the way of 'clues' to convince me that two seemingly unrelated characters, who never appear in the same series of books, are one and the same.

And as so often, I find myself asking: Why? What purpose of Wolfe's would it serve to make them the same anyway? Even if you identify them, where's the moment you say "ah, that's why the Cumaean did X, in order to fulfil Project Y of Echidna's?"

- Gerry Quinn

Lee — 22 Aug 2014, 14:55 · follows Gerry Quinn

the Cumaean>> is the leader of the Witches in BotNS.

Jeffrey Wilson: Is she? She's considered a witch, and Merryn is at her disposal in the Stone Town, but that's not the same.

IIRC, the only other time we see witches is in Severian's boyhood memory of going to the Witches' Tower. There he finds The Cumaean and Merryn only. Perhaps there are only two witches? Given the information we are provided, including Merryn's deference, I feel justified in calling The Cumaean the leader of the witches. I guess it involves a leap of assumption but it seems a small one to me.

Gerry Quinn: Note the plural in "characters". It seems to bear out what I said; snakes and caves do not uniquely identify a character.

It is a human bias to assume that "identity" is uniquely identifiable. But, as characters like Tzadkiel illustrate, other sorts of beings may not be locked into a single body, shape or identity.

Looking to mythology and the Bible and other sources from which Wolfe draws inspiration, we can see that Greco-Roman gods, Judeo-Christian angels and other non-human beings can assume a plural identity, able to change their size, shape, species and even to appear in multiple places at once.

The Cumaean is not a human being. Given Wolfe's mythological/Biblical inspiration, I think she follows the Tzadkielian plural identify pattern and she shares an identity with other snakey, cavey Sun Series characters such as Echidna and perhaps certain extremely large, false

god-like creatures on Urth (and Blue).

Tzadkiel is an angel who resides in "heaven". But some angels have fallen to Earth and Urth (making them "demons").

As for personality characteristics, I mean things like the Cumaean's interest in witchcraft and archeology, and Echidna's rather prudish interest in the virginity of the priesthood, and her killing of Pas to preserve her rule over the Whorl. They don't seem at all like the same person.

I don't see why witchcraft and archaeology exclude prudery and power-hunger in a personality.

I see Wolfe asking his readers to answer certain progressively more difficult questions. Who was "Pas" on Urth? Easy answer- Typhon. Who was Scylla on Urth? A little tougher- Great Scylla? Cilinia? both? Who was Echidna? The snakey Cumaean perhaps? Who were Molpe and Thelxiepeia on Urth? Given the mermaid/ siren connection, perhaps they were Undines? Who was Phaea on Urth? No evidence for any character I am aware of. (Hethor's slug maybe?)

But if someone DOES have some ideas on other Urth characters who translate to Whorl gods I'd be interested!

It would take a lot more in the way of 'clues' to convince me that two seemingly unrelated characters, who never appear in the same series of books, are one and the same.

Yes, of course. You should not have the false impression that I am trying to "convince" you of anything. I certainly hope you are not trying to "convince" me of anything. We each have our own views about Gene Wolfe's work and this is the place we can all share them.

Gerry Quinn — 23 Aug 2014, 14:42 · in reply to Lee

On 22/08/2014 15:55, Lee wrote:

Gerry Quinn: Note the plural in "characters". It seems to bear out what I said; snakes and caves do not uniquely identify a character.

It is a human bias to assume that "identity" is uniquely identifiable. But, as characters like Tzadkiel illustrate, other sorts of beings may not be locked into a single body, shape or identity.

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Tzadkiel is an angel who resides in "heaven". But some angels have fallen to Earth and Urth (making them "demons").

In mythology, snakes and caves also did not uniquely identify a character. And the Cumaean is not indicated to share the characteristic of multiplicity with Tzadkiel (who, by the way, appears only in a book in which neither the Cumaean nor Echidna do). There are other problems, given that it is questionable whether scanning - the origin of the Whorl's Echidna - works on

non-human monsters.

As for personality characteristics, I mean things like the Cumaean's interest in witchcraft and archeology, and Echidna's rather prudish interest in the virginity of the priesthood, and her killing of Pas to preserve her rule over the Whorl. They don't seem at all like the same person.

I don't see why witchcraft and archaeology exclude prudery and power-hunger in a personality.

No, and for all we know they could both be champion footballers too. But we can only identify positive aspects of characters in books given by the author, and no common personality characteristics seem to be given to Echidna and the Cumaean.

Their speech patterns are also completely different - and these are something that Wolfe worked extremely hard on in Long Sun. Had he wanted to identify Echidna with the Cumaean, he would have made her speak like the Cumaean.

- Gerry Quinn

Lee — 24 Aug 2014, 14:09 · follows Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn: In mythology, snakes and caves also did not uniquely identify a character.

You are looking for simplistic one to one correspondence. Mythology (and Wolfe being highly influenced by mythology) do not work in such an orderly and direct manner.

Pagan gods were exported and imported from other cultures and separated and conflated in ways which make it impossible to identify most of them as simply one god by name or "personality". Hence the need for multiple epithets for the various gods, as Wolfe emphasized in Short Sun.

And the Cumaean is not indicated to share the characteristic of multiplicity with Tzadkiel

Given that they are both aliens who have more than one, sometimes animalistic, shape, I find the deduction to be heuristic. If one is familiar with the Judeo- Christian principle that some angels fell to earth to become demons and that these demons usually have counterparts in pagan gods, (e.g. Lucifer, the "light bringer"and Prometheus), the connection becomes more clear.

Aliens such as Tzadkiel and B, F and O represent angels of the Urth story so one may deduce that the aliens residing on Urth represent fallen angels or demons such as Abaia, Typhon, The Cumaean and Father Inire. I, personally, find the analogy useful to understanding the BotNS story.

No, and for all we know they could both be champion footballers too. But we can only identify positive aspects of characters in books given by the author, and no common personality characteristics seem to be given to Echidna and the Cumaean.

I am unclear as to why football is pertinent to this discussion. But I find cave dwelling, marriage to Typhon, snake association, witchcraft and human sacrifice to be a sufficient constellation of traits to link these two Wolfean literary characters via their mythological connections.

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Speak like the Cumaean.

Likewise Pas and Typhon possess strikingly different "speech patterns", "personalities" and other traits. Are you suggesting that Pas and Typhon are unrelated characters? Spring Wind also differed from Typhon, just as young Alexander differed from middle-aged Alexander. We must expect personality changes when a character finds him/herself in different circumstances.

I think the transformation from Urthly demon to electronic Whorl god is the likely source of such differences and, as such, fully intended by Wolfe.

Gerry Quinn — 24 Aug 2014, 15:45 · in reply to Lee

On 24/08/2014 15:09, Lee wrote:

Gerry Quinn:

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I am unclear as to why football is pertinent to this discussion. But I find cave dwelling, marriage to Typhon, snake association, witchcraft and human sacrifice to be a sufficient constellation of traits to link these two Wolfean literary characters via their mythological connections.

Football is as pertinent to the Cumaean as virgin acolytes and a desire to rule. That is to say, the personality characteristics of the Cumaean as written resemble those of Echidna about as much as they resemble those of Lionel Messi.

Nor do I recall Typhon asking after his wife when Severian subsequently encountered him.

Should not these chains of allusion, if they are intended to be meaningful, dip at some point into the personalities or storyline encountered in the text?

It's true that in the promiscuously retconned mythologies of Ancient Greece and elsewhere, characters absorbed characteristics from each other such that probably no two characters in myth can be seen as entirely separate. That seems reason enough in itself to take the position that a relatively vague link has no significance in terms of identifying characters associated with the particular mythological characters.

- Gerry Quinn