

Amazing Proof! 5HC and B/UNS Were Written by THE SAME GUY!

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 17 Apr 1999

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Mitchell A. Bailey — 17 Apr 1999, 15:51

Since things are sorta quiet lately...

I have set out to catalogue parallels between 5HC, B/UNS, other than those already discussed recently, be they similarity of situation, a similar turn of phrase, similar motifs and imagery, or what have you. Here is what I've found:

A dim, red sun. 5HC (in "V.R.T.") further evokes the image of its intrinsically redder sun (compared to our Sol) eventually dying and going out when Victor describes the manner in which he would like eventually to be interred in a cave in the gorge of the Tempus river in the mountains of St. Anne.

A great, vice-ridden port city as a major setting, in which a rundown, neglected library and a citadel are landmarks.

The finding of a dead body in said city, accepted as an almost normal occasional occurrence: the body in brightly colored rags Number Five sees in the alley; the man suffocated "with a lambrequin" the morning after Sev meets Dr. Talos and Baldanders (ever practical, Dr. Talos checks the corpse's pockets)

"A river runs through it". Said river serves as a metaphor for time. More obviously so in 5HC given the river's settlers' name, "Tempus" and its alleged place in the theology of both the marsh people and the hill people. See Sev's discussion with Master Ash. "Gyoll" is the Styx of Scandanavian mythology, the river which the dead cross by the Rainbow Bridge as they near the borders of Hel's realm.

People who tell stories, as an utterance of their humanity. In 5HC, being a shorter work, the stories tend to be referred to than related verbatim.

The staging of a play by major characters in the books.

A wise old teacher who is at least in part cybernetic or prosthetic, but also is very much human: Palaemon; Mr. Million

Another wise old guide or teacher who is an eidolon or "aquastor": the aquastor of Master Malrubius; the Shadow Children's Old Wise One (or Group Norm)

The metaphor of a wound speaking like a mouth, in reference to persons speaking whose time in this world has already expired (i.e. a "dead man walking"): the marshman blinded by the Shadow Children in "A Story"; Baldanders' lines in his role as Nod in "Eschatology & Genesis".

The concept that one who is resurrected from death would be immediately murdered in a panic by his/her loved ones: the sad tale of Zama in UNS; the Old Wise One explaining to Sandwalker

that though the Shadow Children sorrow for their murdered companions, they would not wish to resurrect them by "singing" if such were possible, and would probably try to slay them if such a thing occurred.

The similar dream/vision of hanging disembodied and vulnerable among fiery objects in space: Sandwalker asleep in the sand pit as he is being drawn under by the quicksand; Sev's impressions during the duel of magic with Decuman in the village of magicians. Both dreams end in someone else screaming.

I don't really see a dissertation out of this so far, but, what the heck, I wasn't an English major. Let's see... thesis: The exultants are actually very tall Shadow Children....<g>

Peter Stephenson — 18 Apr 1999, 14:28 · follows Mitchell A. Bailey

"Mitchell A. Bailey" wrote:

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Francis Bacon, presumably?

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That's not so silly... I mean, it's not true, but what is truth? It's plausible in a sort of Borskian sense: the stature of the exultants suggests a certain heroic quality, in the classical mythological sense, while the Shadow Children are explicitly woven into myths, so they have that thematic connection.

By the way, I noticed at Easter that 5HC has just reappeared in a new edition in the UK, in a series called something like 'Science Fiction Masterworks'; according to amazon.co.uk it's published by Millenium on 22 April 1999 (now that's science fiction for you), ISBN 1857988175. You can see the cover art (strange in a not very Wolefean way) at <http://www.amazon.co.uk/uk-covers/1/85/798/817/1857988175.l.gif> (Amazon US doesn't have this edition, just the 1994 Tor reprint. Amazingly, at current exchange rates this is 4p *more expensive*! Possibly a world first for a British edition.)

It's number 8 in the series; many of the others are older works, and I haven't read a lot of them yet, but given the evidence that at least one of the first eight is a real masterwork, it's probable I should. (To that end I bought no. 5, 'The Stars My Destination' by Alfred Bester.)

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