

mantis reads STRANGE TRAVELERS

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 07 Mar 2000

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 07 Mar 2000, 15:11

Right, well took me long enough to get a copy, didn't it? And then other things got in the way.

Well, what's the rush anyway? I had already read/collected all but six of the stories, so I already knew three-fifths of the material.

Ah, but it is a strange thing which happens when they are set side-by-side.

Dr. Nick's theory about the central theme (all the wrong escapes) is a very good one and not one I would argue against. But what tickles the edge of my mind right now is the weird genre threads that link the stories.

Again, I read most of these stories before. "Bluesberry Jam" had struck me as a Delany story--say something like THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION and "Time Considered as a Heliex of Semi-Precious Stones" and maybe some DHALGREN. Quintessential Delany stuff. Like Lo Lobi of TEI, with his musical machete and his Orpheus quest.

"Counting Cats in Zanzibar" struck me as being Asimov's robo-psychologist whasshername as rewritten by a downbeat author like Ballard. Did I make the Tiptree connection at that point, or later? Certainly by the time I'd read "The Man in the Pepper Mill" in magazine form. The protag is so cagey about her name.

"The Death of Koshchei the Deathless" is related to Lang's. (I had forgotten how funny it is, which is depressing because I had only picked it up at WFC in Monterey--not all that long ago.)

"Bed and Breakfast," one of the ones I hadn't seen before, reminds me of Chesterton and/or C.S. Lewis.

"And When They Appear," another new-for-me story. Really a kick in the gut, but then again, it isn't too far removed from "The War Under the Tree." (Imagine letters to the Editor: "Why does Gene Wolfe hate Jesus?!") Very Ballardian (an unexpergated EMPIRE OF THE SUN, perhaps).

"The Haunted Boardinghouse." Well, this is related to John Crowley's LITTLE, BIG: if you didn't know that the house-with-no-back [eek! what are you saying?!] is like the five-faced house in LB, then there is also Crowley's name as one of the 20th century literary giants given in the text. This story ends exactly like a John Crowley story almost always does.

"Useful Phrases." An obvious Borges piece. But coming right after "THB," that gives it an additional spin. Close to BIBLIOMEN territory.

"The Man in the Pepper Mill" has the obvious surface reference to Tiptree; Tiptree seems to lurk in "The Ziggurat," too--many people seemed to sense that when it first came out, so that year I asked Gene Wolfe if "The Ziggurat" was a response to "The Women that Men Don't See" and he

wrote back something like "Gee, I wish I'd thought of that!"

"Ain't You 'Most Done?" was new-for-me. Gaiman related. As a circular bookend, riverrunning back to the beginning, but then there are cross-currents as it changes the first story. (FWIW, I didn't feel this was YADM story, like "The Dead Man" and "The Other Dead Man." It seemed more like the reality warping in THERE ARE DOORS and various short stories where book characters come to life. Reader mileage varies, clearly.)

And that's what got me to thinking: about how many of the other stories are linked in odd ways, perhaps forming similar bookend/bridges. Three Tiptree stories; two stories with plastic dinosaurs. Women and expensive cars? Couples, couples, couples: how many permutations? Borges, Crowley, Gaiman: authors we know Wolfe enjoys reading. But Tiptree? Ballard? Delany? (Ballard's presence might be just an artefact of my own reading--then again I do recall some disagreement with Ballard's fiction in some Wolfe interview; but I do have a sense of Wolfe saying some positive something about Delany in some interview somewhere.)

Anyway, just a few thoughts.

=mantis=

Jim Jordan — 07 Mar 2000, 17:37 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

At 03:11 PM 3/7/00 -0800, you wrote:

"The Haunted Boardinghouse." Well, this is related to John Crowley's LITTLE, BIG: if you didn't know that the house-with-no-back [eek! what are you saying?!] is like the five-faced house in LB, then there is also Crowley's name as one of the 20th century literary giants given in the text. This story ends exactly like a John Crowley story almost always does.

Great link, but don't forget *The Name of the Rose* as a major player here. (labyrinth, library, latin).

Patera Nutria

Matthew Malthouse — 08 Mar 2000, 10:31 · follows Jim Jordan

Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

And that's what got me to thinking: about how many of the other stories are linked in odd ways, perhaps forming similar bookend/bridges.Delany?

Of the suggestion made the only one that I'm immediately familiar with is Delany's "Neveryon" storied both beginning and ending with (iirc) "The Tale of Gorgik".

Reading ST I had the thought that the construction _should_ indicate a circular intent - but then was at a complete loss to see any circularity in the series of stories which left me rather frustrated and disappointed.

Matthew