

story cycles

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 16 May 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3260>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

David Duffy — 16 May 2002, 07:36

Apropos suites and mosaics, there is a much older model such as the stories about Robin Hood etc. There, they are cycles. They may represent episodes in the one narrative, variations on a theme.

| David Duffy (MBBS PhD) ,_-|\n
| email: davidD at qimr.edu.au ph: INT+61+7+3362-0217 fax: -0101 / *\n
| Epidemiology Unit, Queensland Institute of Medical Research _,.-._/\n
| 300 Herston Rd, Brisbane, Queensland 4029, Australia GPG 4D0B994A v

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 16 May 2002, 15:09 · follows David Duffy

David Duffy wrote:

Apropos suites and mosaics, there is a much older model such as the stories about Robin Hood etc. There, they are cycles. They may represent episodes in the one narrative, variations on a theme.

... which, as I understand it, is precisely not what a suite or mosaic is -- you're talking about what in modern commercial writing terms would simply be called a series, stories which perhaps build up a more complete picture of a central character or theme, but which don't really interact beyond that. The point of the pure "story suite" is that the stories actually comment on and, in a sense, revise each other -- that the whole is not only greater than the sum of the parts, but different from the sum of the parts; the parts heterodyne or synergize or whatever this year's term is for things working together to produce effects not clearly obvious from the two separately.

The mosaic (as I am understanding the term) is somewhere in between -- the stories are more separate, like the stories of a "series," but work together to produce an emergent picture. I picked Mike Resnick's "Birthright" as an amazingly clear (to me) example; better known but perhaps not quite as clear would be Cordwainer Smith's tales of the Instrumentality of Mankind, the Underpeople, and all that ... where the point is not just that they share a common future (like, say, Niven's "Known Space" or Heinlein's "Future History") but that they build a total effect that is, again, greater-than-the-sum but not essentially different from what's clearly present in the parts. An even less clear example, because it probably wasn't planned as such but has emerged as such, would be Le Guin's "Hainish" stories.

I suspect that the various Lupiverse series, taken together, can be said to constitute something of a mosaic ... I don't think there's anything emergent from the whole that isn't present in the parts (that would be almost contradictory to the whole holographic style), but the parts together imply a much larger and very whole picture of the universe.