

5HoC + The Long Sun

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 31 Jan 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3827>

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James Wynn — 31 Jan 2003, 17:16

I've been recently been re-reading the Fifth Head of Cerberus. I've been intrigued by the number of parallels between it and The Long Sun/Short Sun. I know this has been vaguely noted here before, but here's a starting list of the particulars I've noticed. I'm not saying TFHoC is in TBotLS universe (except the one which is Wolfe's mind) but that TBotLS, in a sense, the story readdressed. I suspect the reason David Hartwell suggested the title for "The Long Sun" to be "Starcrosser's Landing" is that he saw the parallels as well.

1.

Spiral staircase in the library and "The Other Eye"

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The Whorl and whorl imagery

Note: This similarity could have something to do with concurrent themes relating to genetics, but of course, LS/SS also incorporate sun imagery and the idea of a hopeless trap (hmmm... maybe some of this 'hopeless trap' stuff in Fifth Head as well)

2.

The tall library itself so like a ship with a spiral staircase (a whorl) in the center with a sunbeam "axis", and the book therein entitled "The Mile Long Spaceship"

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The league-upon-league-long spaceship named "The Whorl" with a beam of light for an axis.

3.

Abos (aliens) have notably white skin (incidentally, has anyone already pointed out that Phaedria also is noted for her white skin?)

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Inhumi have such white skin that Quetzal must wear makeup to cover it.

4.

Aliens that cannot help imitating and taking on human identity.

5.

Mr. Million is a Ten Nine Unbound Simulator

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Chems are also "unbound" simulators (OK I know this one is weak, but....)

6.

Mr. Million's face is the scanned image and mind of a man long dead. He is, in a sense (as are all the heirs of Cave Canem), a ghost. = He is basically a walking Sacred Window, an interface to the "god" of Cave Canem.

7.

The dead influencing/dominating the living (Persephone-like).

In the Whorl and Cave Canem are ruled by such "dead men." This is especially true if one believes as I do that Mr. Million is the one running things and that Maitre and #5 are simultaneously the subjects of **his** experiment.

8.

Heavily founded on themes and concepts of imitation and identity.

9.

Intelligent Trees

10.

Twin planets that are green and blue

(twin planets are a natural motif for the shared themes of imitation and identity but why green and blue?)

11.

Cave Canem, a whorehouse whose nickname means 'Beware of the Dog' and run by a 'pack' of Wolfs

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Orchid's in a city built over a labyrinth filled with vicious dog-monsters that are identified by the soldiers as the 'real' gods of the Whorl.

12.

An undercurrent theme from the book of Revelation.

cilluff1 at optonline.net — 31 Jan 2003, 21:52 · follows James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

<>

I recently read it for the first time, after having already reading the Urth/LS/SS cycle, and thought that FHOC seemed like a "dry run" for the Urth cycle. Of course, many of parallel themes (the nature of identity is a biggie) that they share appear in many Wolfe works, so his prediliction to explore such themes could account for it, but, as you pointed out, there are too many factual similarities simply to chalk it up to "well, Wolfe writes about identity a lot." I don't think they are the same fictional universe per se, but that the Urth cycle seems to be a full fleshed-out treatment of the ideas (both philosophical and plot-wise) that Wolfe utilizes in FH.

<<<Abos (aliens) have notably white skin (incidentally, has anyone already pointed out that Phaedria also is noted for her white skin?)

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Not to deny your parallel, but to expand on it, but the parallel that struck me was the similarity between the "Are the colonists of St. C/St. A really Abos but we have forgotten" line of FH and the "are the Neighbors really evolved or somehow dualized humans/is Blue or Green really Urth" debate.

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=

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I actually really like that one, and it does add to the feeling that St. Croix/St. Anne are some of the planets early colonized in the first wave out from earth/urth.

<<Mr. Million's face is the scanned image and mind of a man long dead. He is, in a sense (as are all the heirs of Cave Canem), a ghost. = He is basically a walking Sacred Window, an interface to the "god" of Cave Canem.>>

This definitely foreshadows the scanning of Typhon & Co. and Silk. This is a great example (as are the twin planets, the pre-chems) of why I think Wolfe had these great ideas for a story that he used in FH and which he then fully explored in the Urth cycle.

<<The dead influencing/dominating the living (Persephone-like). In the Whorl and Cave Canem are ruled by such "dead men." This is especially true if one believes as I do that Mr. Million is the one running things and that Maitre and #5 are simultaneously the subjects of **his** experiment.>>

That's a great take on Mr. Million. You also then beg the question, what does it mean to be alive, or to die? Is Mr. Million the same "person," does he survive, i.e., still live, post-surgery, or does he die, to be replaced by something else with his memory? The same can be asked of Severian, Horn, and Silk.

<<<11.

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Orchid's in a city built over a labyrinth filled with vicious dog-monsters that are identified by the soldiers as the 'real' gods of the Whorl.>>

FWIW, here are a few others I thought of. The machines that guard the prison camps foreshadow the Taluses of the LS. The inquisitors of Dr. Marsch seem like the Ayuntamiento. And Mr. Million foreshadow's Lemur & Co., humans who transplant their minds into machines, as distinguished from "mere" chems, whose identities are created by man.

The plot devices and metaphysical questions that the two works share in common definitely make me think that FH is Wolfe's first run at these ideas and that the LS/SS books are his full exposition.

- Shell

James Wynn — 04 Feb 2003, 15:01 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

Shell responded to Crush:

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Crush answers:

But LS/SS and FH share more than the theme of identity, but also

imitation. I think the similarities might give us some clues about what mages are important to Wolfe when working with such a theme (although, for the most part I don't understand what they are).

Crush also said:

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Crush answers:

Well that's more on the whole identity theme isn't it? Marsch insists on addressing Maitre and #5 as though they are one person, which he asserts they are: "one personality". So Maitre doesn't exactly "die" when #5 kills him. The Original may have recognized this since his main conscious purpose seems to have been immortality.

Since you appreciate my "take", I'll explain why I believe it.

1. It seems rather coincidental to me that Tante Jeanine would die (to the ultimate advantage of #5) within a couple years of inheriting Cave Canem.

2. In #5's dream Mr. Million is steering the ship.

3. In #5's dream he warns Tante Jeanine to "stay away" from Mr. Million because he might "hurt" her.

Shell adds:

FWIW, here are a few others I thought of. The machines that guard the prison camps foreshadow the Taluses of the LS. The inquisitors of Dr. Marsch seem like the Ayuntamiento. And Mr. Million foreshadows Lemur & Co., humans who transplant their minds into machines, as distinguished from "mere" chems, whose identities are created by man.

Crush piles on:

Nice. Here are some more:

1. Sol is in the Lizard's Tail constellation.

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Horn and Nettle settle on the "tail of Lizard Island.

2. V.R.T. is constantly "practicing his hand" in his journal.

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The chem at the Sun St. mantaeon does the same.

3. The Shadow Child tells Sandwalker that the abos were originally "mostly long" (this could mean they were like the trees but I don't think so. I think they were like the giant red luminous worms Dr. Marsch reports seeing)

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Of course LS/SS has serpentine aliens.

-- Crush.