

5HC

The Urth list — 12 messages, 6 voices, 26 Jan 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4334>

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Jim Raylor — 26 Jan 2005, 10:25

Thanks Judith

You've raised a lot of interesting points and I am kicking myself for not spotting the 'When Adam delved and Eve span' reference which I am sure is valid.

I think one major theme which helps understand this book is the question of what it means to be human.

For instance :

Chimpanzees create art, can talk if taught sign language, use tools and exhibit social learning.

Do we have the right to treat them as animals?

In Roman times to be a full 'human' you had to be a man and a freeborn citizen of Rome.

In 212 A.D. under the Severian Dynasty this was extended to all free men in the Roman Empire, a massive breakthrough in emancipation, of course women, children (under 15) slaves and barbarians were excluded.

Slavery was often justified with the argument that these blacks do not have souls, they are not real people.

What of the dead? Are they human?

Or elephants or whales? Any dog or cat owner soon learns to treat their pet as a member of the family, or they should not be allowed to keep animals.

Ancient people seem to have seen all animals and many other things (trees, caves, wind, the sun and moon, stars, the sea etc.) as having spirits as we do.

OK now I will annotate the points you have raised which are all very interesting and valid to me.

--- Broceliande27533 at aol.com wrote:

Dear Jim

Read 5hc in Orbit ed

***** Was it the same do you know? I would love to read his other early works... once I finish with this one!

and then all three novellas — c

1975 (in second hand

Quartet ed.) Read once or twice in intervening years

and then came back to Wolfe

this summer.

It has to be re-read and re-read I believe

Read Cave Canem and urth archives on 5HC. Am going through book for about third time in six months annotating as I go.

Not read either Proust or Kafka although understand that VRT v Kafkaesque.

VRT is definitely the most Kafkaesque. I have read all Kafka's published work.

VRT contains references to The Trial, America, The Castle, Metamorphosis, In the Penal Colony and even his collected letters.

Read Ancient Mariner at school 10 zillion years ago.

Re-read it and look for whales.

It's also full of Christian Symbolism and Coleridge hid references to his other poems in the text.

http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/stc/Coleridge/poems/Rime_Ancient_Mariner.html

I assumed that the quote at the beginning was relevant to the question of No 5's name (and that of M. Million and Maitre), (see Archives passim and Borski) as is the ref in the final section to the "iron dog with his three wolf heads." On some things I disagree v strongly with Borski

I think Borski's major deficiency is that he sees as a pipe as a pipe.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe

Many of his insights are valid. I don't buy his genealogy or his maps, but Hitchcock (Patricia Highsmith) Circumcision, Homosexuality, Hell and many other points are valid.

I think the Asian/Asian connection and the references to elephants are something he has completely missed.

Unfortunately Borski, when he sees a broken puzzle as a pair of shoes or a surgical device, seems to stop looking and misses Babbage's difference engine and Ada Lovelace. Elgar's Enigma variations one of which is allegedly about a dog, The Enigma code and Alan Turing etc etc.

I seem to be in the minority in reading this as a great Korean War novel, and a collection of children's stories etc

(on others I agree
or am neutral): the evidence for
the name is I think overwhelming.

Yes... but...

I think the book was grown from his own name Gene
(Rodman) Wolfe

Gene is homonym for 'Jean' (a girl's name in English)
which is french for 'John', Jacques is French for
James.

'Jack' is a variant of John. Ivan is the Russian form,
the hero of all the old stories,

The origin of the name Gene is Eugene.

Female form Eugenia.

Gene also gives us Genetics and Genesis etc etc

I laughed when I found John Wolfe-Barry

Quite apart from my annotation I am amusing myself
with an analysis of the
evidence (internally in the book that is) (1) for
the existence of the abos or
otherwise, and

I think he is suggesting the Abos evolved into us.

(2) whether rather than Victor

having replaced /become Marsch,

I think the murder scene is written (in all three
novels) to allow any of the participants (named or
implied) to be valid suspects.

For example perhaps the prisoner is the shape-shifting
abo cat-girl, imitating the dead anthropologist!

When I get the bottom of this mystery I will be able
to move on to something else.

Marsch has replaced/become Victor: after all that is
the reverse of Veil's
hypothesis and may be relevant to "Liev's
postpostulate" about which there has
been a great deal of debate.

Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology is hard to read
but it is highly relevant here, I believe.

I have always considered my sister to be a better
writer than I.

She alerted me to look for famous women in history in
the book and she has not even read it!

Why the French? Does that have any particular
meaning? Vietnam is
interesting, but I was struck by echoes in the whole
of the book of the French
involvement over all of North America and the
Caribbean. What about General Wolfe and
Quebec (I know nothing about this period of
history)

.

The French and the British had a huge influence on the world in Colonial times. Much of Africa is still Francophone.

The contemporary reference to France is the Vietnam connection.

But you are right there are massive clues to the History of North America.

Geneva was a Celtic town and it is built around a cave inhabited since prehistoric times.

Rome and New York were built on Marshes drained by the Etruscans (religious engineers) and the French.

The Acadians ended up in Cajun Country. Wetlands.

The Huguenots and Acadians are worth investigating.

<http://huguenot.netnation.com/general/huguenot.htm>

<http://www.valleyweb.com/acadians/>

Jean de Loup is the Loup-Garou of Cajun myth.

It also fits in well with my unpopular 'Anne of Green Gables' Theory.

Why the reference of the family in the photograph?

Why Celtic (I have an

inchoate theory about that?).

Back to AoGG in my mind, Anne's red hair and green-grey eyes hint at a Celtic origin. Her mother died before she was three months old.

There is also a wicked pun on Wales/Whales implied I believe.

The Celts are another vanished race who are alive and well thank you very much. Many went to America.

I could say more but I am interested in your inchoate version and do not want to impose my beliefs.

What is the long house

in the photograph?

I read it as a row of terraced houses. In Cork for example, you often find streets where each house is as different from its neighbour as you could imagine, though they share an internal wall.

But sticking my neck out again I would suggest it is a reference to the architectural folly of Port Meirion (My Prisoner theory)

'The Prisoner' was aired on TV in Canada (near Illinois) in 1967 before it was even shown in the UK. Thomas Disch (another of Knight's proteges), who later wrote a book about Number 6 was one of the writers involved in the production of this cult classic.

One last thought for the moment where I have formulated a clear opinion.

I was thinking about the question of tool use/inability to use tools. Again a

lot of debate in the archives about this and evolutionary theory: Dollo's hypothesis and so on. All clearly relevant. But GW being GW there are likely to be more shades of meaning. (It's been suggested that the abos had no opposable thumb but that can't be right I think: they couldn't have done the things that they are described as doing and I read the inability as being some kind of mental/psychological/conceptual inability.)

I believe GW may still have problems with his hands and leg from his childhood Polio. Monkeys were used in experiments that led to a cure, poor crippled monkeys. Tool use is taken as a determinant of intelligence in animals and man.

Interestingly enough the prehistoric ancestor of dogs and cats had a semi-opposable fifth toe on its forepaws.

<http://www.kerwoodwolf.com/EVOLUTION.htm>

Gene joked once in an interview that when he wasn't writing he enjoyed shovelling snow. (whilst reading 'Cat in the Hat?') In Suess' classic the snow turns pink I believe. Rosy... Rougette, as the french say.

There is that passage at the end of Dr Hagsmith "the test that the French are supposed to have applied at the ford called Running Blood-stopped every man that passed and made him dig with a shovel" (I think that the Running Blood ford is the Rougette river that painted Marsch's boots and Victor's legs (with red mud presumably) on April 10th).

No, it was blood.

Back to my obscure 'Ho Te Que - Tiger Lady of the Delta' Theory.

She died in 1965.

Aaaargh! But you are also right and I should have spotted this before. Anne in Green Gables is obsessed with why the roads there are all red... like her hair.

A rougette is also a radish (reddish?)

Frequently GW seems to juxtapose a positive and a negative interpretation... Was the river running with blood or just red clay soil (excellent for agriculture).

I am not sure how seriously I should look for drug references in GW, but given the times and the references to hallucinogens, it may be appropriate. I was reminded of Terry Southern's story book 'Red

Dirt Marijuana and Other Tastes'. published in 1967.
<http://www.litkicks.com/People/TerrySouthern.html>

Borski thinks that is a reference to a massacre.
When I first read it that
was how it felt to me: and there's an echo of
Holocaust victims and perhaps
others digging their own graves. (Borski also thinks
Mr D ` "might be fifteen
years ago, might be more. Our years are longer here-
did you know that?" is
reference to that massacre but I think he was
talking about Victor's birth/age).

Korean War started in 1950, Vietnam in 1965 according
to American history.
I think it is a reference to all genocides including
the holocaust.

But I then thought "shovel", do you dig with a
shovel?

And then a picture came repeatedly into my mind of
the "Adam Delving" stained
glass window at Canterbury (it survived the
Reformation because it was too
high for the stones"). I put "Adam delving" into a
search engine, and up it
came. It shows Adam after the Fall digging with a
pointed ended shovel-like
implement (and there's a red ribbon like area in
front of him too).

Very well spotted. I keep missing the Christian
references.
If Adam was the first man then no-one before him used
tools.

So I think that (amongst all the other references)
this is to do with the
suggestion that the abos were prelapsarian humans:
Adam only started delving
after and in consequence of the Fall and perhaps he
also couldn't as well as
didn't use tools before then. See also David in the
debate in the library "Humanity
implies descent from what we may conveniently call
Adam, that is, the
original terrestrial stock", and, at the end of "A
story" : "Three men with their
limbs wrapped in leaves".

One thing I love about Gene Wolfe is that when you do
spot a connection, you can then find he makes the same
point over and over again. If you can't find it in at
least three places I would dismiss it as coincidence.

(There was some discussion in the archives about the relationship of 5HC to James Blish's A Case of Conscience, which is also about whether a sentient race are unfallen beings with souls).

I don't think I have read it, but I do think GW has littered the book with references to his favourite SF writers. I would be surprised if any of the authors in the first few Orbit anthologies were not referenced explicitly or implicitly.

I am a big fan of Thomas Disch, so it easy for me to spot the references to many of his stories.

Thats all for now.

Judith

To be honest, I am a little upset at the continuing abuse I have received from a few people on the Urth list. I admit I was a little over-exuberant when I began posting after reading everything on T5HOC I could find and although Borski and others, gave me a few leads, I feel nobody has explained the book to my satisfaction.

I have been corresponding with Korean War veterans and their families and they have been extremely helpful.

Thank you again for your insights and I hope you find something of interest in my reply here.

Regards

Jim

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Jan 2005, 11:16 · in reply to Jim Raylor

Jim -

While I've found some of your postings, as you say, overexuberant and sometimes way out in left field, I hope you haven't felt abuse from me. I certainly intend none.

A few details.

Gene also gives us Genetics and Genesis etc etc

Well, yes ... And number five is not only a Gene Wolfe, but a gene wolf, a genetic predator. And there is a very definite "Genesis" aspect to 5HC, particularly in the matter of the Fall.

(I also think the suggestion that a race that doesn't use tools may be unfallen - emphasis on "may" - is spot on.)

I think the murder scene is written (in all three novels) to allow any of the participants (named or implied) to be valid suspects.

I think we may also expect a Cain-and-Abel aspect to each murder: that is, they are all to be perceived as murders of close kin. Due perhaps to envy/jealousy?

Aaaargh! But you are also right and I should have spotted this before. Anne in Green Gables is obsessed with why the roads there are all red... like her hair. A rougette is also a radish (reddish?)

Except that "radish" comes from *_radix_*, root - which is also the root (or radical) of "radical." Still, in the '60s, and even more in the era of the Korean War, "radical" would be tied to "red," or rather "Red."

Very well spotted. I keep missing the Christian references.

These seem to me (more or less importantly) present in all Wolfe's major work, even the ones on overtly pagan themes like the Latro books, "There Are Doors" and "The Wizard Knight." Keeping at least one eye on that aspect seems to me key to understanding them.

One thing I love about Gene Wolfe is that when you do spot a connection, you can then find he makes the same point over and over again.

Yep. It's almost as if he was begging for the use of "deconstructive" techniques - here, the discovery of the "brisure," hinge, that so much of the work swings back and forth on.

--Dan'l

"We're going to sit on Scorsese's head"
-- The Goodfeathers

Nathan Spears — 26 Jan 2005, 11:29 · in reply to Jim Raylor

This isn't a scholarly post; just a strange observation. I loaned my brother Book of the New Sun and Radiohead's Amnesiac at the same time, and afterward he said he noticed so many similarities that he wanted to write the band and ask them if they'd been reading the book while they made the album. I don't think they did, but here's some of the things that stand out:

Pyramid Song

"i jumped in the river and what did I see?
black-eyed angels swimming with me"

...

"all the figures i used to see
all my lovers were there with me
all my past and futures"

This fits in well with the undines and the alzabo, obviously.

You and Whose Army?

"Come on, come on
You and whose army?
You and your cronies
Come on, come on
Holy Roman empire
Come on if you think
Come on if you think

You can take us on"

Not as tailored but certainly fits in with the Ascian theme.

Pull/Pulk Revolving Doors

"There are doors that open by themselves
There are sliding doors
And there are secret doors
There are doors that lock
And doors that don't
There are doors that let you in and out
But never open"

This fits in both with the House Absolute's secret doors and metaphorically with Severian moving through time.

I'm not suggesting that Amnesiac is Radiohead's singalong to BotNS, or even that they pulled anything from it. I just thought the similaries were interesting and that someone else might enjoy them. As a side note, the album's tone fits oddly well with the book's.

Jim Raylor — 26 Jan 2005, 11:47 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Thank you Mark

I had always regarded the 'Elephant and Whale Jokes' I heard as a child as classic examples of Absurdist and Surrealist humour.

I had never associated them with the racist jokes, which I soon learned to hate.

I can understand now why some people found that post of mine offensive, it was never my intention to impugn any race.

And thank you for that insight.

I believe Gene's experiences in Korea cured him of all racist tendencies that he may have acquired and gave him a deeper understanding of humanity which extends to elephants, whales and crippled monkeys.

Thank you for giving me the benefit of the doubt.

I should learn to look before I leap.

Regards

Jim

--- Mark Millman <millman at heimdallr.dyndns.org>

wrote:

Dear Mr. Raylor,

Please forgive me if you've already heard this from other correspondents.

As you write from England, I'm going to give you the benefit of the doubt and

assume that you don't know the meaning of elephant jokes. They are generally acknowledged to be racist, directed against blacks. They're thought to have developed out of white discomfort about the potential change in blacks' social situation during the United States' civil rights movements in the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

While I grant that some people who wrote in response to your posts may have been reacting to your exuberance, members of this list don't generally attack other people for having wild ideas. I am, however, quite convinced that the notes calling you a troll were prompted by the elephant-joke post. Had you thought to disclaim racism, you probably would not have had the same reaction.

As I say above, I've given you the benefit of the doubt on this matter because I'm not sure how widely known the association between elephant jokes and anti-black racism may be outside the U.S. I'm sure it would go a long way toward mending fences if you were to post a note indicating that you meant no offense.

Best,

Mark Millman

On Wed, 26 Jan 2005, you wrote:

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Regards

Jim

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Jan 2005, 11:59 · in reply to Nathan Spears

Hunh.

It would not be the first time rock bands have based their work on SF classics. Aside from the umpty-million tributes. Genesis' song "Watcher of the Skies," for example, is supposedly a

tribute to

Childhood's End (by way of Keats). Bowie's album "Diamond Dogs" is a take on _Nineteen Eighty-Four_, as is _Listen Now_, by 801 (a side project of Roxy Music's Phil Manzanera). Rush's album _2112_ is loosely based on Ayn Rand's _Anthem_. Etc.

--Dan'l

"We're going to sit on Scorsese's head"
-- The Goodfeathers

Nathan Spears — 26 Jan 2005, 12:20 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Interesting. I'd heard that you can play Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon with 2001: A Space Odyssey (the film) simultaneously, and that the band timed the music that way. Let me reiterate that I am not making that claim here about Radiohead and those parallels to BotNS.

I also wanted to say that I should have dictionaried 'collusion' before I used it as my subject. I didn't intend it in the sense of 'connivance' but merely in the sense of 'hidden colloboration', which it might not even have.

Nate

--- Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
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--Dan'l

--
"We're going to sit on Scorsese's head"
-- The Goodfeathers

Hmpf MacSlow — 26 Jan 2005, 12:34 · in reply to Nathan Spears

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The really weird thing is that I'm listening to that album *right* now. And yes, I started listening *before* I read this post. Been listening to it all afternoon. I was listening to Pulk/Pull Revolving Doors when I began reading, and it just switched to You And Whose Army?

feels paranoid

Hmpf

maru — 26 Jan 2005, 13:33 · in reply to Nathan Spears

...

So Dark side o' the moon synches with 2001 *and* The Wizard of Oz?

~Maru

Those bands! So talented!

Nathan Spears wrote:

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--Dan'l

--

"We're going to sit on Scorsese's head"

-- The Goodfeathers

Nathan Spears — 26 Jan 2005, 13:53 · in reply to maru

You're right; I was confusing the two stories in my head. Wikipedia says:

It has been claimed that the psychedelic "stargate sequence" that concludes the film, entitled "Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite", matches perfectly with the Pink Floyd song, "Echoes", just as Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon is believed to synchronise well with the movie The Wizard of Oz. [1] (<http://www.synchronicityarkive.com/display.php?view=2>)

--- maru <marudubshinki at gmail.com> wrote:

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Nathan Spears wrote:

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--Dan'l

--

"We're going to sit on Scorsese's head"

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Broceliande27533 at aol.com — 28 Jan 2005, 04:41 · follows Jim Raylor

The Marquis of Carabas

Sorry: misprint: should be "otherwise based on German and Norse myth". Puss in Boots is French: Perrault I think. Wagner imports the idea into Rheingold, (Alberich has stolen the Rheingold and by pronouncing the curse on love has created the ring of power which enables him to rule the world. He has also had the Tarnhelm forged, and it allows him to transform himself into anything he wants. Wotan (later called Valfather/the Wanderer) and Loge (Loki) are trying to steal the Rheingold in order to ransom Freia, aka Holda, (and her golden apples) who has been pledged to the giants to pay for the building of Walhall (Valhalla). Alberich tries to frighten them away by transforming himself into a dragon, but Loge tricks him by betting him that he can't transform himself into something small and weak. He turns himself into a toad, and they pounce, and then steal the gold in turn. Its pivotal to the plot.) The Ring is otherwise based entirely on German and Norse myth. From what was written about The Wizard Knight, I gather that that is also based on Norse myth, but has a Marquis of Carabas reference. I wondered whether that was a coincidence. I haven't read TWK yet, as I said.

5HC

I am aware of the arguments for and against my propositions in the archives.

I am not convinced that there has been a comprehensive analysis in which the evidence and arguments on either side have been set out and evaluated. Maybe there is not a clear answer to

question i. But for my own satisfaction, I want to take a structured and comprehensive approach.

So far as the second question is concerned, I have read the archives on this too. I am aware of the handwriting change, and the point at which it occurs. I know about the Wolfe interview. But are we certain that this was intended to be the whole story? because at the moment I think that there is some material to support the proposition that Marsch replaces Victor, or that there is some synthesis. My present view is that it GW intended it to be entirely ambiguous, just as is the question of who replaced who on St Anne. But again I want to do a proper analysis.

Whether I bother anyone with my conclusions is another matter!

I am disappointed that no-one is so far interested in a 5HC opera. Perhaps an oratorio would be better. Then no-one would have to wrestle with Mr Million's costume.

Judith P

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 28 Jan 2005, 13:17 · in reply to Broceliande27533 at aol.com

Judith -

I honestly don't think _5HC_ is very, well, musical. For one thing, opera and oratorio tend to operate in a very linear sort of time
- a necessity, given the nature of music - and _5HC_ is anything but. One could possibly write a libretto based on the story - assuming one could reach some conclusions on just what the story _was_ - but it wouldn't be _5HC_ in ways far more fundamental than the way Peter Jackson's _tLotR_ isn't Tolkien's..

--Dan'l

"We're going to sit on Scorsese's head"
-- The Goodfeathers

maru — 30 Jan 2005, 14:43 · in reply to Broceliande27533 at aol.com

To continue the fugue identification, perhaps it should be an avant-garde production, with the three stories happening simultaneously, and instead of the rhyming you seem focussed on, it should be done as alliterative verse.

~Maru

Puss in boots is my favorite fairy tale.

Broceliande27533 at aol.com wrote:

....

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Perhaps an oratorio would be better. Then no-one would have to wrestle with Mr Million's costume.

Judith P