

cthulhu mythos, BotNS

The Urth list — 21 messages, 10 voices, 02 Jun 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4432>

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don doggett — 02 Jun 2005, 14:37

I googled to see if this had been touched on in the archives and I didn't find anything, but forgive me if I'm going over old ground. I'm in the process of reading a collection of short stories by August Derleth, set in Lovecraft's universe. The stories are quite good so far, and it seems to me that perhaps Derleth, rather than Lovecraft, was a greater influence on Wolfe regarding the nature of Abaia and the rest and their conflict with the Hiero's. The very fact of a conflict seems to bear this out as Derleth sets the Great Old Ones (Cthulhu etc) against the Elder Gods who, interestingly enough, reside in Orion. There is no such dichotomy in Lovecraft, to the best of my knowledge. There is also mention of some of these creatures living forward in time and plenty of references to something thundering in places beneath the earth (the resemblance to the mines of saltus is uncanny). Another persistent theme I have noticed in Derleth's stories is the ability of forbidden knowledge to corrupt. The simple reading of passages from the Necronomicon or the other evil texts from these stories is often enough to set a character on the path to his doom. This makes me wonder about Severian's possession of the Lives of the 17 Megatherians (isn't that one of the books in his sabertache?) and where his loyalties lie.

Don

nastler — 03 Jun 2005, 00:46 · in reply to don doggett

Small point; The book 17 Megatherians doesn't go in the sabertache, it stays in the library. The "corrupting" influence on Sev probably comes to him through Thecla, who is a good bet for having read 17 Megs...

I'd like to hear more discussion about the Great Old Ones / Elder Gods. I think it's only been referenced before, not chewed to the marrow the way things are usually done on this list.... :-)

nastler

--- don doggett <kingwukong at yahoo.com> skrev:

I googled to see if this had been touched on in the archives and I didn't find anything, but forgive me if I'm going over old ground. I'm in the process of reading a collection of short stories by August Derleth, set in Lovecraft's universe. The stories are quite good so far, and it seems to me that perhaps Derleth, rather than Lovecraft, was a greater influence on Wolfe regarding the nature of Abaia and the rest and their conflict with the Hiero's. The very fact of a conflict seems to bear this out as Derleth sets the Great Old Ones (Cthulhu etc) against the Elder Gods who, interestingly enough, reside in Orion. There is no such dichotomy in Lovecraft, to the best of my knowledge. There is also mention of some of these creatures living forward in time and plenty of references to something thundering in places beneath the earth (the resemblance to the mines of saltus is uncanny). Another persistent theme I have noticed in Derleth's stories is the ability of forbidden knowledge to corrupt. The simple reading of passages from the Necronomicon or the other evil texts from these stories is often enough to set a character on the path to his doom. This makes me wonder about Severian's possession of the Lives of the 17 Megatherians (isn't that one of the books in his sabertache?) and where his loyalties lie.

Don

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<http://mail.yahoo.com>

Andy Robertson — 03 Jun 2005, 05:50 · in reply to nastler

nastler writes:

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I'd like to hear more discussion about the Great Old Ones / Elder Gods. I think it's only been referenced before, not chewed to the marrow the way things are usually done on this list.... :-)

nastler

I honestly don't think there is much direct reference.

However, Lovecraft's "Old Ones" were really non-supernatural alien entities of such power that they could not be distinguished from gods, from the human perspective.

It's arguable that he was the first really influential writer to do this - to address the idea of gods, from a rigorously non-supernatural perspective.

Wolfe has many non-omnipotent "gods" of this type: Erebus and Abia are godlike in their power as far as humans are concerned, but there is nothing really supernatural about them.

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pthwndxrc1zp — 03 Jun 2005, 09:27 · in reply to Andy Robertson

What exactly are Erebus and Abia's "powers"? Despite lots of scary intimations and background threats, it doesn't seem as if we really have much information on what such creatures can do, beyond some kind of low-level mind control (and perhaps having their lieutenants "swim" through time upon occasion). Or am I missing something?

Wolfe has many non-omnipotent "gods" of this type: Erebus and Abia are godlike in their power as far as humans are concerned, but there is nothing really supernatural about them.

Andy Robertson — 03 Jun 2005, 09:36 · in reply to pthwndxrc1zp

pthwndxrc1zp writes:

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Much like Cthulhu's. They have half-human submarine servitors; they control dreams; they will rise in the last days to take the world. But more to the point they control much of the Urth's surface through their enslaved human servants.

They are not exactly GOO's but then Cthulhu was small beans compared to chappies like YogSothoth or Azathoth.

Chris — 03 Jun 2005, 10:29 · in reply to Andy Robertson

I take that "rise in the last days to take the world" bit with a grain of salt; it seems more like a bit of standard mythology crusted on to whatever the original story was. The big bad nasties *always* rise in the last days to contend for dominion over the world. And any self-respecting big-bad-nasty will make sure everyone fears that, one of these days, it will be back...

Andy said:

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They are not exactly GOO's but then Cthulhu was small beans compared to chappies like YogSothoth or Azathoth.

James Wynn — 03 Jun 2005, 11:30 · in reply to Andy Robertson

I honestly don't think there is much direct reference.

Maybe, maybe not. But there is some evidence that Wolfe wet his whistle on Lovecraft for THE WIZARD KNIGHT. The only literary reference I know of for "Skai" is the farmland-belted River SKAI beyond which lies the city of Ulthar where it is illegal to kill a CAT.

~ Crush

Maru Dubshinki — 03 Jun 2005, 11:47 · in reply to James Wynn

On 6/3/05, James Wynn <thewynns at earthlink.net> wrote:

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~ Crush

I take it that that reference for Skai is drawn for a Lovecraft story?

~Maru

Andy Robertson — 03 Jun 2005, 11:57 · in reply to James Wynn

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~ Crush

We know Wolfe likes Lovecraft (vide the fake Necronomicon in PEACE) but despite that I don't agree this Skai is in any way related.

James Wynn — 03 Jun 2005, 12:54 · in reply to Maru Dubshinki

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Oh, yeah, sorry. THE CATS Of ULTHAR among others.

Maru Dubshinki — 03 Jun 2005, 13:40 · in reply to James Wynn

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~ Crush

I take it that that reference for Skai is drawn for a Lovecraft story?

~Maru

Oh, yeah, sorry. THE CATS Of ULTHAR among others.

Fortunately, I don't have to just take your word- I can read it online!

http://wikisource.org/wiki/The_Cats_of_Ulthar

<http://www.dagonbytes.com/thelibrary/lovecraft/thecatsofulthar.htm>

God bless public domain works!

~Maru

Jeff Wilson — 03 Jun 2005, 17:22 · in reply to Andy Robertson

Andy Robertson wrote:

nastler writes:

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Wolfe has many non-omnipotent "gods" of this type: Erebus and Abia are godlike in their power as far as humans are concerned, but there is nothing really supernatural about them.

Perhaps; they are certainly an order of being below that of the Pancreator, but they and their servants have qualities and insights into the divine truth beyond that of mere mortals, even if they attempt to deny that truth. Lovecraft's axioms in the background of his Mythos stories do not admit a difference in kind of the natural world and the supernatural forces at work, only that the fallible human mind calls

the parts of nature that escape its full grasp "supernatural" and that the nature of these ancient beings are so alien that the mind destructively fails in its attempt to perceive their character.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Sarah Dorrance-Minch — 07 Jun 2005, 19:45 · in reply to Andy Robertson

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:
I honestly don't think there is much direct
reference.

I can't see any either.

(By way of introduction: Hi, my name's Sarah, my SCA friends call me Midori which I prefer anyway; I discovered Gene Wolfe and the Timescape books last year, totally by accident, and got hooked. My husband, much to my amusement, when he saw me reading something called *_In The Shadow of the Torturer_*, asked me, "What's that? A romance novel?" but he got a little more interested when I clobbered him over the head with the book and told him that it was anthropological science fiction.)

Wolfe has many non-omnipotent "gods" of this type:
Erebus and Abia are
godlike in their power as far as humans are
concerned, but there is nothing
really supernatural about them.

I would LOVE to see a cross-over written by Wolfe and Steven Brust. I have no idea how Vlad Taltos and Severian the lame would encounter each other, although I imagine it would probably not be on Urth since I can't see Vlad travelling off his own planet; but there are certain similarities. Gods that aren't supernatural (or really even gods, but might as well be). A mixture of science and magic. Interesting antiheroes who are a lot nicer inside than they think they are (the Han Solo syndrome, if you want to call it that). Interesting backstory in the form of made-up myths and legends.

Midori/Sarah

Ah, love couldst thou and I conspire/ To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire/ Would we not break it all to bits, and then/ Remold it nearer to the heart's desire - Omar Khayyam

Reach me a gentian, give me a torch
let me guide myself with the blue, forked torch of this flower
down the darker and darker stairs, where blue is darkened on blueness.
- D.H. Lawrence, "Bavarian Gentians"

Andy Robertson — 07 Jun 2005, 23:48 · in reply to Sarah Dorrance-Minch

Sarah Dorrance-Minch writes:

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:

I honestly don't think there is much direct reference.

I can't see any either.

(By way of introduction: Hi, my name's Sarah, my SCA friends call me Midori which I prefer anyway;

Welcome: Guillaume of Dublin (from the Far Isles) here :-)

I would LOVE to see a cross-over written by Wolfe and Steven Brust.

Now, I haven't read ANY Brust: is he good??? Is he, uh, Wolfey?

hartshorn

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David Duffy — 08 Jun 2005, 01:04 · in reply to Andy Robertson

On Wed, 8 Jun 2005, Andy Robertson wrote:

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hartshorn

You **have** to read at least one of his novels.

Brokedown Palace is pretty indirect. It might be the closest to say _Short Sun_. Brust channels Dumas very well too -- I was reading recently that Dumas's dialogue is as it is merely because he was paid by the word.

David Duffy

Maru Dubshinki — 08 Jun 2005, 08:17 · in reply to David Duffy

On 6/8/05, David Duffy <David.Duffy at qimr.edu.au> wrote:

On Wed, 8 Jun 2005, Andy Robertson wrote:

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Short Sun. Brust channels Dumas very well too -- I was reading recently
that Dumas's dialogue is as it is merely because he was paid by the word.

David Duffy

Funny- I heard the same exact thing about Dickens.
Probably explains why I never could finish 'the Pickwick Papers'.

Incidentally, have you read "To Reign in Hell"? That sounds like the most Wolfe-ian of his stuff.

~Maru

Sarah Dorrance-Minch — 10 Jun 2005, 20:22 · in reply to Andy Robertson

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:
Now, I haven't read ANY Brust: is he good??? Is
he, uh, Wolfey?

Good? I think so. I like his tie-ins to Romanian and
other eastern European folklore, his filk, his dry
sense of humour, his ability to make extremely
antiheroic characters sympathetic, his versatility,
his ability to create worlds.

All of which aside from the ethnic stuff are strengths
Wolfe also has. But is he Wolfey? I wouldn't say so.
His style is for the most part far less ruminative.
You won't get the philosophical discussions. You will
get good characterization, style, plot, and
anthropological interest.

Midori/Sarah

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- D.H. Lawrence, "Bavarian Gentians"

Sarah Dorrance-Minch — 10 Jun 2005, 20:23 · in reply to David Duffy

--- David Duffy <David.Duffy at qimr.edu.au> wrote:
Brokedown Palace is pretty indirect. It might be
the closest to say
Short Sun. Brust channels Dumas very well too --
I was reading recently
that Dumas's dialogue is as it is merely because he
was paid by the word.

Oh yeah. Brust is also very good at pastiche.

Sarah Dorrance-Minch — 10 Jun 2005, 20:27 · in reply to Maru Dubshinki

--- Maru Dubshinki <marudubshinki at gmail.com> wrote:
Incidentally, have you read "To Reign in Hell"? That
sounds like the
most Wolfe-ian of his stuff.

At least in theme.

I think the series about Vlad Taltos comes closer in
terms of character development and cultural background
(a society with distinct castes, a hero whose career
is less than savoury initially, semidivine beings who
play puppet-master behind the scenes, oh so subtly).

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Andy Robertson — 11 Jun 2005, 01:29 · in reply to Sarah Dorrance-Minch

Sarah Dorrance-Minch writes:

Good? I think so. I like his tie-ins to Romanian and
other eastern European folklore, his filk

He perpetrates filks? This is problematic ;-)

Sarah Dorrance-Minch — 11 Jun 2005, 20:38 · in reply to Andy Robertson

--- Andy Robertson <andywrobertson at clara.co.uk> wrote:
He perpetrates filks? This is problematic ;-)

I think he was one of the original instigators of the
movement.

Midori/Sarah

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