

"Tracking Song" and other stories

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 06 Jun 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4840>

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.

Matthew Groves — 06 Jun 2007, 22:33

Joshua writes:

"Caves also pop up in Fifth Head. My memory of Fifth Head has degraded somewhat, but I think that the mythological abo (Sandwalker?) made a pilgrimage to one in "A Story." This cave is a thematical doppleganger of Aunt Jeanine's basement room in the first novella." And Transient adds: "Wolfe often has his characters grope around in complete darkness. "A significant portion of one of the books in Long Sun is spent by a motley assortment of characters wandering around in completely lightless caves. One of them naked the entire time."

Yes, I should have noted both those occurrences, as well as Horn's cleaning the sewers on Green, and probably many others.

Toward a list of criteria of the underworld type-scene:

- There is a cave, underground tunnel, labyrinth, and/or undercity;
- The theme of blindness (or at least groping in darkness) is often present;
- There are always small-man, half-man, or man-animal residents in the underworld;
- The protagonist is often trespassing there;
- The protagonist is initially harrowed by the denizens of the underworld. He is always explicitly or symbolically on trial, and/or he achieves a sort of détente with its denizens, winning them over to his side.

There are more common threads, I'm sure.

Dan'I writes:

"Yes, there are quite a few running images and themes in GW's work [...] "One I push at that nobody else seems to see or agree with: the embedding of non-Christian cosmologies into a larger Christian cosmology, which itself is frequently ambiguous."

Well, I don't know on what basis others may disagree, but for what it's worth this seems to me like a central project of Wolfe's. (I say this as an atheist and a Wolfe fan-boy.)