

Chris' last name *Pirate freedom*

The Urth list — 27 messages, 13 voices, 27 Nov 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4935>

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Duncan Truter — 27 Nov 2007, 19:00

Hi. Does anyone have any idea what Chris' last name is? He mentions it but never says what it is.

spoiler

spoiler

It couldn't be Columbus, could it? Nobody really knows where Columbus came from, so I suppose it's a possibility especially since time travel is involved, and Columbus was around 35 when he first became known which gives him 7-8 years in Cuba to raise his younger self properly (wikipedia link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_theories_of_Christopher_Columbus)

has anyone got any devastating counter-evidence? I'm pretty sure I'm about to be embarrassed.

Duncan

Rex Lycanthrosaurus — 27 Nov 2007, 21:05 · in reply to Duncan Truter

On Tue, 27 Nov 2007 11:00:52 -0800, "Duncan Truter" <dtruter at gmail.com> said:

Hi. Does anyone have any idea what Chris' last name is? He mentions it but never says what it is.

It couldn't be Columbus, could it?

Columbus seems unlikely, since it is neither long nor difficult to pronounce (ditto for the variants Colombo and Col?n), about the only two clues we're given besides the implication Chris's last name is Italian. Certain historical data also suggest this is a later period than 1492, though with time travel, I suppose anything's possible.

In one of my earlier PF posts, however, I suggest Chris might be named after a former listmember and illuminary of these pages. That person I'll now further identify as (Michael) Andre-Driussi.

Think about it. The name is Italian, it's long (12 letters/five syllables) and up until mantis himself recently revealed here how it's pronounced ("...nobody can say my name,[it's] dree-YOU-see"), I'd always assumed his name was pronounced 'dry-OOH-see.'

Wolfe also imports another real life buddy of his into the narrative, Pat "The Rat" O'Leary -- so why not the lexicographic Andre-Driussi?

Don't suppose anyone knows whether or not mantis's middle name is Christopher? Or how he acquired the dual name to begin with, by birthright or marriage? (My hyphenated children bear the names of both my wife and myself.) The odd thing here is that 'Driussi' seems to be a

variant of the name 'Andre,' which sort of makes mantis our version of Boutros Boutros-Ghali or Rin Tin Tin. <gr>

Rex (as in 'Roy') LYCAnthrosaurus (more fun with wordplay!)

Rex Lycanthrosaurus
lycanthrosaurus at fastmail.fm

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<http://www.fastmail.fm> - Accessible with your email software
or over the web

Cliff Judge — 27 Nov 2007, 21:06 · in reply to Duncan Truter

On Nov 27, 2007 2:00 PM, Duncan Truter <dtruter at gmail.com> wrote:
Hi. Does anyone have any idea what Chris' last name is? He mentions it
but never says what it is.

spoiler

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_theories_of_Christopher_Columbus)

has anyone got any devastating counter-evidence? I'm pretty sure I'm
about to be embarrassed.

Well, a bit of wikipediaing leads me to guess that the pirate adventures take place somewhere
between the 1630s and 1670s. Isn't that a bit later than Columbus?

Maracaibo was founded in 1529, Portobello in 1597. Port Royal was decimated by and
earthquake in 1697. So we're proabably somewhere in those years, but leaning towards the
1600's, because Burt mentions Drake beating the Spanish Armada, and that took place in 1597.

The events which drove the buccaneers to piracy took place in the 1630s or so.

And if Captain Burt = Captain Henry Morgan, then the sacking of Portobello took place in 1667.
But Captain Burt might not be Captain Morgan. It's interesting though, check out the wikipedia
articles on Henry Morgan, buccaneer, and Tortuga. Henry Morgan is known to have sacked
Portobello, and also to have revived buccaneer culture. There was also something in there
about some buccaneers having gone into woodcutting before being pulled back into the lifestyle
by Morgan. I apologize for the half-assed post here but that's what I've surfed from Wikipedia.
Wolfe made a point to remind us that we shouldn't follow stuff we find online too closely in the
book. :)

Duncan Truter — 27 Nov 2007, 23:53 · follows Cliff Judge

Hi. I edited my post a couple of times before I posted it, and managed to edit out the words
'time travel'. If Chris has done / will do it two times, why not three? Sorry for mangling of
message, I get this as a digest which doesn't allow for easy replying.

someone wrote:

"

Well, a bit of wikipediaing leads me to guess that the pirate adventures take place somewhere between the 1630s and 1670s. Isn't that a bit later than Columbus? "

Duncan

stilskin — 28 Nov 2007, 02:46 · in reply to Duncan Truter

Duncan Truter <dtruter at gmail.com> wrote:

Hi. Does anyone have any idea what Chris' last name is? He mentions it but never says what it is.

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It couldn't be Columbus, could it? Nobody really knows where Columbus came from, so I suppose it's a possibility especially since time travel is involved, and Columbus was around 35 when he first became known which gives him 7-8 years in Cuba to raise his younger self properly (wikipedia link:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_theories_of_Christopher_Columbus)

has anyone got any devastating counter-evidence? I'm pretty sure I'm about to be embarrassed.

Duncan

He mentions at one point that nobody can pronounce his last name. Plus, the dates are wrong. The novel is set long after Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

<http://www.sff.net/people/stilskin>

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 28 Nov 2007, 10:21 · follows stilskin

On Wed, 28 Nov 2007 06:00:52 +1100 Duncan Truter

<dtruter at gmail.com> wrote:

Hi. Does anyone have any idea what Chris' last name is? He mentions it but never says what it is.

I think it has to be something Sicilian. Chris says he's Sicilian; one of his favorite saints is St Lucy (of Syracuse in Sicily); he travels under the alias "de Messina".

Don't know where to go from there, however.

Matthew King — 28 Nov 2007, 15:47 · in reply to Duncan Truter

On Nov 27, 2007, at 5:53 PM, Duncan Truter wrote:

Hi. I edited my post a couple of times before I posted it, and managed to edit out the words 'time travel'. If Chris has done / will do it two times, why not three?

Sorry for mangling of message, I get this as a digest which doesn't allow for easy replying.

someone wrote:

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Well, a bit of wikipediaing leads me to guess that the pirate adventures

take place somewhere between the 1630s and 1670s. Isn't that a bit later

than Columbus?

"

Other than there being a man in the Caribbean with the name Christopher, what evidence from the book suggests Columbus? I cannot think of any.

A third time travel jaunt would necessarily take place entirely outside the bounds of the narrative. Unless Fr. Chris is lying, we know most of what happened on his personal timeline: from his father's move to Cuba, the time slip backwards, through his pirate career, to the time slip forward, through his tenure as a priest, to his imminent departure for free Cuba. He intends at the end of his confession to become Brother Ignacio at the school/monastery. Fr. Chris knows that Brother Ignacio follows young Chris in the timeslip backward, and then Ignacio tools around for a few years waiting for Chris and Novia to show up.

Between Ignacio and young Chris's initial drift back, we (and Fr. Chris) don't really know what Ignacio was doing. But can you fit the whole career of Christopher Columbus into those years?

Another point against, one that I think is very important to the simplicity of the overall plot, is that more time travel would require additional time slip events. In the narrative, there are only two: a backwards slip, and a forwards slip. Young Chris is surprised by the backwards slip, but Fr. Chris, as Brother Ignacio, hitches a ride on it. Years later, Captain Chris slips forward; so far as we can tell, he is alone.

Fernando Q. Gouvea — 01 Dec 2007, 20:34 · in reply to Matthew King

I just finished reading the book, so these are off-the-cuff comments and questions.

I'm not really completely convinced of the "Chris is evil" reading. He strikes me as no worse than many other Wolfe characters. Wolfe knows, I think, that most of us are bad men who are protected from our own badness by a veneer of civilization and lack of opportunity. Chris is one such, and when the veneer comes off we see the real man underneath. He is loyal, brave, smart, and sometimes even thoughtful. I actually find him rather likeable, though he is surely a rogue, a murderer, and yes, somewhat selfish when it comes to his love for Novia. I'd be scared of him if I met him in the street, and probably wouldn't want to have him over for dinner... but that's probably just as true about Ignatius Loyola.

I think it is significant that a lot of the "faults" we see in Chris are things that might well have not been seen as faults in the 18th century.

This point is made repeatedly in the book, of course. A clear example of this is his attitude to the use of force. We see almost any use of force as "violence". He doesn't. He has the faults of the 18th century too. He cannot see someone who does not resist the attempt at sexual abuse as a "victim"; for him, rape is rape, but sexual contact that is not (physically) coerced is not.

Is Chris's attitude towards the Spanish a virtue or a fault? We'd say a fault, folks in the 18th century would, I think, disagree. Are we that sure we are right?

On a purely formal level, I am glad that Wolfe avoided the "try and change the past" territory that Witcover mentions in his review. That would turn the novel into a time travel story, a logical puzzle in which figuring out the ins and outs of the time paradoxes would take over the book. (In general, I believe that while Wolfe's books can puzzle the reader, they are not intended primarily as mind games.) Avoiding that morass, Wolfe gives us a portrayal of character in the context of a historical period that he clearly finds fascinating.

Some unrelated points:

- 1) Wolfe has used the motif of love for a woman as motivation many times before. (The ending of "There Are Doors" comes to mind, for example.) This is clearly an important theme for him. He seems to be aiming for a mix of Dante's portrayal of Beatrice as a motivation toward sanctity and the far more common portrayal of woman as temptress. With a slight tendency towards the Beatrician side, I think.
- 2) The missing mother is also an important Wolfean theme. I think we should be wary of jumping to the "Chris is a clone" conclusion. Mothers that are missing or hidden appear very often in Wolfe's books.
- 3) I'm also not sure about the conclusion that this is a different "present" (or near future) from ours. Just because of the monorail? Perhaps, but this assumes we're talking about the very near future. How long will it take for the communists to fall in Cuba? It could easily take long enough for the monorails to arrive by then.
- 4) Which "most famous question in the New Testament" did Saint Jude ask?
- 5) Why is Captain Kidd in the glossary? A privateer who turned pirate" is a good description of Captain Burt.
- 6) What is the chronology of Chris's story? How long does Brother Ignacio wait? I agree that it might be interesting to see if we get any clues as to what he was doing. Of course, he may well have simply been slaving away, doing the proper penitence for his acts at last, and learning that patience, too, is a virtue.

Fernando

=====

Fernando Q. Gouvea
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Colby College Editor, FOCUS
Mayflower Hill 5836 Editor, MAA Reviews
Waterville, ME 04901
fqgouvea at colby.edu

War is a dreadful thing, and I can respect an honest pacifist, although I think he is entirely mistaken. What I cannot understand is this sort of semi-pacifism you get nowadays which gives people the idea that though you have to fight, you ought to do it with a long face and as if you were ashamed of it.
-- C.S. Lewis, in Mere Christianity

On Sun, 02 Dec 2007 07:34:56 +1100 "Fernando Q. Gouvea" <fqgouvea at colby.edu> wrote:

6) What is the chronology of Chris's story? How long does Brother Ignacio wait? I agree that it might be interesting to see if we get any clues as to what he was doing. Of course, he may well have simply been slaving away, doing the proper penitence for his acts at last, and learning that patience, too, is a virtue.

Oh, surely not. It could only be a "proper penance" if he did everything he could to stop "Chris1" from turning into a murderer. But he doesn't do that; he wants "Chris1" to do exactly what he did.

I bet he tells himself: "Surely God can't blame me any more than he does already for not stopping myself from committing a sin I've already committed in the past." Just as he tells himself: "Surely God will not blame me for breaking my vow of chastity, when that vow will have been made in the future, at the time I break it."

He's always got excuses, has Father Chris. He's a good, pious man right up until the point when being good & pious gets in the way of something he wants.

If you buy into a negative connotation for "Jesuitical", it's not surprising that Loyola is one of his favorite saints.

(Look what he does with the slaves from his first pirate action. He *wants* to set them free, but there's all these good reasons for not doing it.

Thinking about it just bring him back to the priest in Veracruz. Nuttin' you can do.

Except the priest was doing something: he was giving them water, and teaching them about God, and trying to set an example to everybody, so that everybody might treat each other a little better than they do. Just like Chris says he always tried to do, except when he couldn't.

So what does Chris do, when he's decided he can't free the slaves? He recruits some of them, gives one to his pirate-goombah as a sex toy, auctions off the rest after spending some effort fattening up the last of the batch, and keeps his share of the money. No telling them about God or setting an example.

And when the nasty Spanish steal "his" money from him - the money he's kept from the sale of the ship and the slaves, unspent - he's just gotta become a pirate, because they forced him into it.

His hypocrisy is appalling.)

Here's what I think "Chris2" was doing in Cuba, before the time-slip. I think he was working for his father, or at least getting close to him. His father would like the man he's become. He'd feel good about sending young Chris to the monastery if "Ignacio" was there to keep an eye on him and teach him stuff. He'd say to Chris: "You do what that tall priest with the beat-up face tells you to do. He's a stand-up guy, for a priest. He doesn't get you down the way abbotts do."

And while Chris and Ignacio are working away in the Dominican fields, Ignacio would be telling Chris stuff, hinting about girls, and how everybody else in the monastery is a leccacazzi, and how much the outside world has to offer. How everything is OK if you love God and he is your

friend. How it's OK if you just do what you can do.

Chris speaks of Ignacio many times to Novia - so she says. She says he told her Ignacio was a second father to him. She says he told her he would trust Ignacio more than he'd trust himself.

But I don't think he reports **any** conversation with Ignacio, from the monastery time. Nothing that was said, nothing that he learned from him, nothing of what must have been his greatest intimacy in that place.

Why is that? Well, I think the answer is pretty obvious.

paul witcover — 02 Dec 2007, 15:19 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com wrote: On Sun, 02 Dec 2007 07:34:56 +1100 "Fernando Q. Gouvea"

wrote:

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Why is that? Well, I think the answer is pretty obvious.

I'm not sure I agree that Chris2 meets his father (who may, after all, be himself, if he is a clone); at least, I don't see any definite evidence for it. But otherwise I think you're spot on as to the relationship between Chris1 and Chris2. It's when trying to figure out who came first, 1 or 2, and thus who bears primary moral responsibility for what follows, that the time travel paradoxes really kick in.

My fantasy of what happens after Chris2 has Novia all to himself is that, when he spills his story

to her, she grabs the nearest knife and eviscerates him.

The similarity of "wiseguy" and "Lesage" led me to wonder if that pirate is really another iteration of Chris, and whether Chris's father is Lesage -- and there might be more than one temporal loop involved -- but when I saw Wolfe at the World Fantasy Convention, I asked him explicitly about this, and his response was "No, I hadn't thought of that. You're smarter than I am." I protested the contrary!

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 02 Dec 2007, 16:51 · follows paul witcover

On Mon, 03 Dec 2007 02:19:23 +1100 paul witcover <gdeonn at yahoo.com> wrote:

I'm not sure I agree that Chris2 meets his father (who may, after all, be himself, if he is a clone); at least, I don't see any definite evidence for it.

But "himself" with a beat-up face, taller and possibly engineered in other ways - so maybe not a huge surprise if he doesn't recognise "Ignacio".

There's perhaps two things which lend a bit of support to my story.

First, "Chris2" deciding not to go to Jersey: 'What if he did not enroll me in the monastery school because of something I ("the tall priest with the beat-up face", he would call me) happened to say to him?'

Why does he imagine a particular description? Because it was a one his father had used when he was a kid, talking about Ignacio?

Second: more complicated, but it might also help explain why he came to be in the monastery. Chris speculates that his father "must have given the monastery fifty thousand or so, because nothing was said about payment in all the years I was there".

I think "Ignacio" paid the fees. He knows where the treasure is buried. He's sure as hell going to check that it's still there, and being the avaricious little sod that he is, he will dig it up. He converts it, and uses some of the proceeds to pay the school fees. He takes the remainder with him in some negotiable form when he goes back in time.

How did he convert the treasure? He partnered up with his father.

"Ignacio's" cut: some cash. And Chris.

Fernando Q. Gouvêa — 02 Dec 2007, 17:22 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com wrote:

He's always got excuses, has Father Chris. He's a good, pious man right up until the point when being good & pious gets in the way of something he wants.

(...)

His hypocrisy is appalling.)

Oh, no more appalling than the hypocrisy of many religious folk throughout the centuries (and I speak as one of them). Yes, he does stand faithful to his faith until it gets in the way of what he wants, and yes, he then does what he wants. Is that really so different from most of us? Wolfe is

smart to have Chris transgress in ways we will disapprove, rather than by, say, using birth control against the teaching of his church.

I'm curious about this emotional reaction to Chris's misdeeds.

Here's what I think "Chris2" was doing in Cuba, before the time-slip.

I think that's fairly easy to guess, though my guess wouldn't include the direct connection with his father you think might have happened. But the interesting question to me is what he was doing **after** Chris leaves Cuba. That, after all, is the part the narrator doesn't yet know about. If there's any redemption for Chris, that is the natural place for it. Does anything Ignacio says at the end give hints about what he might have been doing since he "lost track" of Chris?

Fernando

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Fernando Q. Gouvea
Carter Professor of Mathematics
Colby College Editor, FOCUS
5836 Mayflower Hill Editor, MAA Reviews
Waterville, ME 04901 <http://mathdl.maa.org>
<http://www.colby.edu/~fqgouvea>

Politicians do it to everyone.

Fernando Q. Gouvêa — 02 Dec 2007, 17:24 · in reply to paul witcover

paul witcover wrote:

My fantasy of what happens after Chris2 has Novia all to himself is that, when he spills his story to her, she grabs the nearest knife and eviscerates him.

It does sound quite likely!

The similarity of "wiseguy" and "Lesage" led me to wonder if that pirate is really another iteration of Chris, and whether Chris's father is Lesage -- and there might be more than one temporal loop involved -- but when I saw Wolfe at the World Fantasy Convention, I asked him explicitly about this, and his response was "No, I hadn't thought of that. You're smarter than I am." I protested the contrary!

:-) I think the temptation to be smarter than Wolfe and to see hidden connections everywhere is with us always...

Fernando

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Your lucky number is 3552664958674928. Watch for it everywhere.

Fernando Q. Gouvêa — 02 Dec 2007, 17:26 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com wrote:

I bet he tells himself: "Surely God can't blame me any more than he does already for not stopping myself from committing a sin I've

already committed in the past." Just as he tells himself: "Surely God will not blame me for breaking my vow of chastity, when that vow will have been made in the future, at the time I break it."

This is the clearest and best evidence for the "bad Chris" reading, I agree.

Fernando

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Dan — 04 Dec 2007, 15:25 · follows Fernando Q. Gouvêa

Fernando wrote:

:-) I think the temptation to be smarter than Wolfe and to see hidden connections everywhere is with us always...

Lol. Actually reading Wolfe makes me feel very stupid and uneducated and it's through the effort of discovering these hidden connections that I feel slightly less stupid. :)

And I'm sure they are there, all writers know far more about their characters and story that ever makes it onto the printed page.

paul witcover wrote:

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Like any good magician, Wolfe won't reveal any of his "tricks" lest it tarnish the glamor. Instead, he pays the questioner a kind compliment to sidetrack the discussion. Very clever!

Matthew Groves — 08 Dec 2007, 17:31 · follows Dan

Fernando wrote:

I'm not really completely convinced of the "Chris is evil" reading. He strikes me as no worse than many other Wolfe characters.

He unquestionably has all of the good characteristics you list; Wolfe's works frequently argue that there is good and evil in everyone. Pas could be Silk.

I think it is significant that a lot of the "faults" we see in Chris are things that might well have not been seen as faults in the 18th century.

I think there's a similar situation here to the one some have argued exists with Able in Mythgarthr. Unlike most of Chris's fellow pirates, Chris does not have the excuse of being a product of the time and place he finds himself. Even if we could excuse certain of Chris's actions had they been performed by a 18th-century contemporary, Chris has reason to know better, and Chris's own testimony would indicate that he does know better.

He cannot see someone who does not resist the attempt at sexual abuse as a "victim"; for him, rape is rape, but sexual contact that is

not (physically) coerced is not.

Chris does not openly say that a non-resisting boy is therefore not a victim ("The boys were the victims of those priests, I am not arguing that they were not.") although that may be what he really believes. What he says is that in such a case the priest had only one victim, whereas the people who "taught the boys to be sheep" had two: the priest himself was a victim of those people. Therefore those people "are at least as much to blame as the molester. Maybe more."

6) What is the chronology of Chris's story? How long does Brother Ignacio wait?

This is an important point. As Chris writes his confession, he has not yet been Ignacio.

How long does Brother Ignacio wait? I agree that it might be interesting to see if we get any clues as to what he was doing. Of course, he may well have simply been slaving away, doing the proper penitence for his acts at last, and learning that patience, too, is a virtue.

to which thalassocrat at nym.hush.com wrote:

Oh, surely not. It could only be a "proper penance" if he did everything he could to stop "Chris1" from turning into a murderer. But he doesn't do that; he wants "Chris1" to do exactly what he did.

I'm not sure this is fair to Ignacio, considering Wolfe as the writer.

Remember what Severian told little Severian, in their conversation about the zoanthrops, about what it means to be human:

"We may force a dog, sometimes, to act like a man - to walk on his hind legs and wear a collar and so forth. But we shouldn't and couldn't force a man to act like a man."

So there are limits to what Ignacio can do to change Chris. He may have done all he could. Remember his weeping as Chris left the gates, and remember that while young Chris is homeless in Old Havana, what he misses most of all is "the work [Brother Ignacio] and I had done outside--helping milk sometimes, herding the pigs, and weeding." The care of animals is a big deal for Wolfe, I think. Later, Chris is assigned to feed Se or's parrots, which he enjoys, and he says "It brought me closer to Se or, and that soon paid off in a big way."

From reading the end of chapter three, I feel like "Se or" is important in some way. He "shoots the sun at noon every day," and Chris and he "were pretty good friends. He was still Se or to me, and I still touched my forehead and all that." But I may be reading too much into this.

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 09 Dec 2007, 03:49 · follows Matthew Groves

On Sun, 09 Dec 2007 04:31:49 +1100 Matthew Groves
<matthewalangroves at gmail.com> wrote:

I think there's a similar situation here to the one some have argued exists with Able in Mythgarthr. Unlike most of Chris's fellow pirates, Chris does not have the excuse of being a product of the time and place he finds himself. Even if we could excuse certain of Chris's actions had they been performed by a 18th-century contemporary, Chris has reason to know better, and Chris's own testimony would indicate that he does know better.

I think Wolfe is playing around with our preconceptions about his themes and other narrative tropes.

IMO, WK is the story of a young guy striving to excel with respect to the highest ideals of a different time & place. His progress reflects increasingly refined conceptions of those ideals: a crude lout-buffoon-Hercules type to start with, and a pretty much perfect exemplar of self-sacrificing chivalry by the end. You might not like the ideals in question (I don't, partly), but that's the framing of the story.

PF is different: Chris strives towards the *lowest*. Even within his 17th century world, piracy is seen as a Bad Thing. He doesn't have to be a pirate, and certainly not a pirate captain; despite what he says over & over again, he actively chooses it. Think of all the opportunities he has to leave "the life". He doesn't, because he loves it. Look how quickly his squeamishness disappears. Recall his little walk with father Phil. Phil says he always feels like cheering when he sees the church steeple rising against the sky; Chris had the same feeling once - when they raised the black flag on the Castillo Blanco.

We (or at least I) have become familiar with a Wolfean theme in which love + courage are redemptive, transmuting into something lofty even if gross to begin with. Abe's love for Dsiri draws him higher and higher, and so on.

In PF, Wolfe pulls that chair out from underneath us. We expect the same kind of story, but there isn't anything redemptive about Chris' love for Novia or his courage. They just take him lower & lower.

IMO, PF is about freedom. We have free will; morality, holiness or whatever is must be chosen actively. It's possible to choose "pirate freedom" - freedom from ethical constraint - or you can choose ethical conduct ("God's freedom", I suppose). But you have to choose.

Abe chose to be ethical - within the context in which he found himself, and with an increasingly refined conception of "ethical"). Chris chooses PF, actively. He pretends to himself that it wasn't a choice, but that's just hypocrisy - a final layering of sin on top of all his other sins which I think cover just about all of the Big Ones.

Wolfe is also playing with the Graham Greene-ish trope of the sinner redeemed by love for another, hopelessly compromised and twisted over a long stretch of constant penance and usually culminating in a spectacular act of self-abnegation. We (or at least I) launch into PF expecting a story like that. The "furniture" is all there: the former pirate, now a priest, confessing his sins, moving inexorably towards a crisis of some kind etc etc.

We glide over the horrific acts Chris willingly participates in; we are on the other side of the confessional screen, and as reader- priests we have our forgiveness already prepared. We expect a final act of contrition, something to make the confession valid.

That's how Chris plays it, deliberately I think. But this story isn't that story. There is no contrition. Chris wants it all to "happen again".

[As an aside on Greene: I picked up "The Captain and the Enemy" last week in a little Australian outback town. Greene's last book, I think - I'd never heard of it before, but I wonder if it might have been in Wolfe's mind when he wrote PF? There are some resonances, and not just the image of Drake waiting for the mules of the Spanish bullion-train, shared by the child "enemy" and the typical Greene redeemed-sinner "Captain".]

Matthew Keeley — 01 Jan 2008, 05:45 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

I know I'm reviving an old thread here, but it seemed more sensible than starting a new one. I've just finished PF, and while I really liked it, the Urth list has once again reminded me of how much I miss in Wolfe. So as to avoid spoilers, I haven't read this list since PF's release, and I've missed it.

A few quick thoughts: Does Chris ever explain why he becomes a priest? It's not like he needs it for his disguise as Ignacio, a lay brother.

Also, when does he realize that he is Ignacio? I don't suppose he ever has a mirror to look in while he's a pirate? Also, how does Chris' face get so "beat up?" I don't recall Chris receiving any terrible blows to the head in the course of his pirate adventuring, though he certainly gets beaten up several times. Perhaps we should attribute Chris' face to the natural "weathering" effect of his pirate life, though I'm not sure if he spends enough time in the past for such a process to occur.

thalassocrat wrote:

If you buy into a negative connotation for "Jesuitical", it's not surprising that Loyola is one of his favorite saints.

Something very similar came into my mind when I finished PF tonight - Chris is wonderfully good at bending logic. Perhaps he justifies his non-intervention in the life of his younger self by arguing that doing so would be a form of suicide by time paradox? Could Ignacio make himself cease to exist by stopping Chris from going back in time? Chris does, after all, very explicitly state that no one has the right to suicide.

And of course, "Ignacio" is the Spanish version of Ignatius... Chris clearly put some thought into his pseudonym.

thalassocrat wrote:

Oh, no more appalling than the hypocrisy of many religious folk throughout the centuries (and I speak as one of them). Yes, he does stand faithful to his faith until it gets in the way of what he wants, and yes, he then does what he wants. Is that really so different from most of us? Wolfe is smart to have Chris transgress in ways we will disapprove, rather than by, say, using birth control against the teaching of his church.

The one mention of "birth control" in the text appalls Chris: Novia describes her friends' abortions-by-boat, the thought of which, Chris says, "make [him] sick." Here at least Chris seems in actual honest accord with Church teaching.

thalassocrat wrote:

Look how quickly his squeamishness disappears.

Recall his little walk with father Phil. Phil says he always feels like cheering when he sees the church steeple rising against the sky; Chris had the same feeling once - when they raised the black flag on the Castillo Blanco.

I agree, but surely it says something for Chris that he believes he should feel that way? For once he seems cognizant of his own faults.

Another thought: Why doesn't Chris tell us exactly when his pirate days were? All he says is that the numbers on the charts "didn't start with twenty." We get a few more hints, as when the exploits of, say, Cromwell, Morgan, etc. are mentioned as taking place approximately x years in

the past, but I doubt we'll be able to find an exact date.

What becomes of Chris' son? Are there any historical pirates with long and difficult-to-pronounce Italian / Sicilian names? I wonder if Chris' son follows his father into the family business. There's not much to indicate that this would break Chris' heart.

What did Chris do to get confused for a Dutchman or a German? I don't think he even spoke those languages.

Finally, I think we need to discuss the Pirates of the Caribbean films. While hardly masterpieces, they seem to be in the minds of both Wolfe and Chris. Chris mentions the inaccuracies of the pirate films he sees on TV, and I'd tend to think the Pirates of the Caribbean films would be in fairly constant rotation in 2010-era Florida; they're long out of theaters and ripe for cable. I suppose Chris could be watching Captain Blood on a classic movie channel instead, but I think Wolfe was inspired by Disney's trilogy. So many parts of PF seem like rebuttals to PotC (all the mentions of rape, slavery, torture, etc. plus the discussions on the youth of pirates and the size of pirate ships).

I've only seen the first two Pirates movies, but I remember the first film described how a person could be both "a pirate and a good man." I think Wolfe has a few things to say about such a possibility...

Any thoughts on other pirate fiction that might have gone into PF? I'm wondering in particular about Captain Blood, which from what I gather has some ideas Wolfe might like. Alas, I haven't read the book or seen the movie, so I can't elaborate too much. Still, I know that the book is about a Catholic forced into piracy and his attempts to remain honest.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 01 Jan 2008, 07:57 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

On Dec 31, 2007 9:45 PM, Matthew Keeley <matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:
I know I'm reviving an old thread here, but it seemed more sensible than starting a new one.

Thank you. I also just finished the book (got it for Christmas).

Another thought: Why doesn't Chris tell us exactly when his pirate days were?

Possibly because it isn't very important. It's pretty clearly the mid 1670s though.

What becomes of Chris' son?

Or daughter?

What did Chris do to get confused for a Dutchman or a German?

He's blond?

Any thoughts on other pirate fiction that might have gone into PF? I'm wondering in particular about Captain Blood, which from what I gather has some ideas Wolfe might like. Alas, I haven't read the book or seen the movie, so I can't elaborate too much. Still, I know that the book is about a Catholic forced into piracy and his attempts to remain honest.

I've not seen or read Captain Blood, but one thing worth looking at (if only as a comparator) is Tim Powers' ON STRANGER TIDES. Tim is the other great Catholic SFF writer today, and his take on pirates is very different indeed...

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

I saw a dirty overcoat at the foot of the pillar of the road/and
propped inside was an old man whom time could not erode

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 01 Jan 2008, 11:58 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On Tue, 01 Jan 2008 16:45:31 +1100 Matthew Keeley
<matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:
I know I'm reviving an old thread here, but it seemed more
sensible than
starting a new one. I've just finished PF, and while I really
liked it, the
Urth list has once again reminded me of how much I miss in Wolfe.
So as to
avoid spoilers, I haven't read this list since PF's release, and
I've missed
it.

A few quick thoughts: Does Chris ever explain why he becomes a
priest? It's
not like he needs it for his disguise as Ignacio, a lay brother.

I think we find this out right at the end. After he came back from the 17th century, "this and that happened", and he almost landed in jail a couple of times. Then he entered the seminary. Seems pretty clear that he did it to escape the heat & probably also to launder an identity for himself.

Th elaudering worked, presumably - he gets a passport.

Also, when does he realize that he is Ignacio? I don't suppose he
ever has a
mirror to look in while he's a pirate? Also, how does Chris' face
get so
"beat up?" I don't recall Chris receiving any terrible blows to
the head in
the course of his pirate adventuring, though he certainly gets
beaten up
several times. Perhaps we should attribute Chris' face to the
natural
"weathering" effect of his pirate life, though I'm not sure if he
spends
enough time in the past for such a process to occur.

I figured most of the beating up happened right at the beginning, when he resisted being raped.
Eg: The girls in Veracruz offered to straighten his nose for him afterwards.

thalassocrat wrote:

If you buy into a negative connotation for "Jesuitical", it's
not
surprising that Loyola is one of his favorite saints.

Something very similar came into my mind when I finished PF
tonight - Chris
is wonderfully good at bending logic. Perhaps he justifies his
non-intervention in the life of his younger self by arguing that
doing so
would be a form of suicide by time paradox? Could Ignacio make
himself cease

to exist by stopping Chris from going back in time? Chris does,
after all,
very explicitly state that no one has the right to suicide.

And of course, "Ignacio" is the Spanish version of Ignatius...
Chris clearly
put some thought into his pseudonym.

Check the wall of casuistry he builds when he's talking about his murder of <wossisname - don't have the book here>. The Spanish would have killed him anyway; he might have died in the fighting; Chris just **had** to kill him - all the way to the final self- damning conclusion, where he blames God for it.

thalassocrat wrote:

Look how quickly his squeamishness disappears.

Recall his little walk with father Phil. Phil says he always
feels
like cheering when he sees the church steeple rising against the
sky; Chris had the same feeling once - when they raised the
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flag on the Castillo Blanco.

I agree, but surely it says something for Chris that he believes
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feel that way? For once he seems cognizant of his own faults.

Another thought: Why doesn't Chris tell us exactly when his pirate
days
were? All he says is that the numbers on the charts "didn't start
with
twenty." We get a few more hints, as when the exploits of, say,
Cromwell,
Morgan, etc. are mentioned as taking place approximately x years
in the
past, but I doubt we'll be able to find an exact date.

Check an earlier post of mine on chronology - I think you can narrow down the date to around 1675.

What becomes of Chris' son? Are there any historical pirates with
long and
difficult-to-pronounce Italian / Sicilian names? I wonder if
Chris' son
follows his father into the family business. There's not much to
indicate
that this would break Chris' heart.

Earlier I very tentatively speculated that Chris might be his own son.

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 01 Jan 2008, 12:05 · follows thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

On Tue, 01 Jan 2008 16:45:31 +1100 Matthew Keeley
<matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:
Still, I know that the book
is about a
Catholic forced into piracy and his attempts to remain honest.

I disagree with that, obviously. I think it's about a guy who decided he wanted to be a pirate & then blamed God for it.

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 01 Jan 2008, 12:14 · follows thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

On Tue, 01 Jan 2008 23:05:50 +1100 thalassocrat at nym.hush.com wrote:

On Tue, 01 Jan 2008 16:45:31 +1100 Matthew Keeley

<matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:

Still, I know that the book

is about a

Catholic forced into piracy and his attempts to remain honest.

I disagree with that, obviously. I think it's about a guy who

decided he wanted to be a pirate & then blamed God for it.

Oops, sorry - misread that - you're referring to Capt Blood, which I don't know at all.

Matthew Keeley — 01 Jan 2008, 17:17 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Jan 1, 2008 2:57 AM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

What becomes of Chris' son?

Or daughter?

I suppose I just assumed it would be a son for thematic reasons... rather silly of me, I'm afraid.

What did Chris do to get confused for a Dutchman or a German?

He's blond?

He is, isn't he? I guess I need to work on my close-reading.

Furthermore, how did that biography of Chris know he vanished when sailing alone? I gathered that he kept a pretty low profile after the disastrous meeting with Lesage. Did Ignacio or Novia tell people the story? If so, why? If they wanted to become respectable, wouldn't they want to avoid mentioning their former occupations as pirates?

Any thoughts on other pirate fiction that might have gone into PF? I'm wondering in particular about Captain Blood, which from what I gather has

some ideas Wolfe might like. Alas, I haven't read the book or seen the movie, so I can't elaborate too much. Still, I know that the book is about a

Catholic forced into piracy and his attempts to remain honest.

I've not seen or read Captain Blood, but one thing worth looking at (if only as a comparator) is Tim Powers' ON STRANGER TIDES. Tim is the other great Catholic SFF writer today, and his take on pirates is very different indeed...

I agree that would be a valuable place to look. Thanks for the suggestion, though I won't be able to read OST for quite a while (It's not available where I'm spending the next six months).

JBarach at aol.com — 01 Jan 2008, 18:30 · follows Matthew Keeley

Mathew writes:

What did Chris do to get confused for a Dutchman or a German?

He's blond?

He is, isn't he? I guess I need to work on my close-reading.

Nope. He says somewhere early in the book that he has dark hair. But I can't find the page just now.

John

Matthew Keeley — 02 Jan 2008, 09:58 · in reply to JBarach at aol.com

And there I thought my imagination was running away with me again. Dark hair does seem more classically Italian.

So Chris is tall, dark, and genetically engineered. How long till we start seriously discussing the possibility of Chris really being Severian(1)?

By the way, I think we should take some time and play the "Name Game" with PF. We all know how much Wolfe likes names, and there's already been some discussion in that vein here. Someone suggested Hoodahs (sic?) was a variation on Judas? Lesage is literally "the wise," right? And Valentin suggests St. Valentine, Roman martyr and the namesake for Valentine's Day. "Christopher" is literally "Christ-carrier," and Chris seems to carry God's voice around with him, what with the praying on the ship and his "vision" before rescuing Hoodahs. Plus, Chrisopher is a good nautical name, not just because of Columbus, who I know someone here mentioned, but also because St. Christopher carried the infant Jesus over water (A river, I believe).

Also, why did Chris think Hoodahs came from the future? Just because he spoke English under duress? Or did Chris have reason to believe there might be other time travelers on the Spanish Main?

-Matt

On Jan 1, 2008 1:30 PM, <JBarach at aol.com> wrote:
Mathew writes:

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He's blond?

He is, isn't he? I guess I need to work on my close-reading.

Nope. He says somewhere early in the book that he has dark hair. But I can't find the page just now.

John

See AOL's top rated
recipes<<http://food.aol.com/top-rated-recipes?NCID=aoltop00030000000004>>and easy
ways to stay in
shape<<http://body.aol.com/fitness/winter-exercise?NCID=aoltop00030000000003>>for winter.

Dan — 02 Jan 2008, 13:21 · follows Matthew Keeley

At 11:17 AM 1/1/2008, Matthew Keeley wrote:

Furthermore, how did that biography of Chris know he vanished when sailing alone? I gathered that he kept a pretty low profile after the disastrous meeting with Lesage. Did Ignacio or Novia tell people the story? If so, why? If they wanted to become respectable, wouldn't they want to avoid mentioning their former occupations as pirates?

This is a good question. This implies there is more to Chris' history yet to be told. Perhaps Wolfe plans to write more. After all, Chris indicates revenge as being one of the two motives for returning...

There is no way they would admit to being pirates while living in Veracruz. A quick way to the gallows, though Novia may just be imprisoned since she was pregnant.

Dan

Matthew Keeley — 02 Jan 2008, 19:23 · in reply to Dan

On Jan 2, 2008 1:21 PM, Dan <autarch at vipppn.com> wrote:

At 11:17 AM 1/1/2008, Matthew Keeley wrote:

There is no way they would admit to being pirates while living in Veracruz.

A quick way to the gallows, though Novia may just be imprisoned since she was pregnant.

Also, does Chris sail out from Veracruz or Havana? The biography says Havana, but doesn't he sail from Veracruz at the end of the book? I'd check if my book weren't 3000 miles away.

-Matt