

free will and piracy

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 18 Dec 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4960>

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Marc Aramini — 18 Dec 2007, 04:44

On an unrelated note, I do think that any discussion of the moral ambiguity inherent in Father Chris must confront the older version breaking down in tears when the young novitiate leaves and falls into the past - an older version that never once tries to deter the younger man from the path that will lead to murder, debauchery, and other piratical pass times.

There is the Christmas homily of Chris that speaks of gold - the talents given by God and the manner in which we use them. It is unclear to me whether the younger or older versions of Chris are using those talents, or "gold", in the manner most stereotypically considered as good, and I think somehow the older versions refusal to curtail the free will, or the "pirate freedom" of his younger self is somehow central to any discussion of the redemptive meaning or catharsis of Chris' psuedo confession.

Certainly free will and the existence of evil must be discussed when the text's tangential relationship to Catholicism is considered.

Good discussions on this repetitive cycle and faux confession of Fr. Chris so far in the list.

paul witcover — 18 Dec 2007, 13:23 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Marc Aramini <marcaramini at yahoo.com> wrote: On an unrelated note, I do think that any discussion of the moral ambiguity inherent in Father Chris must confront the older version breaking down in tears when the young novitiate leaves and falls into the past - an older version that never once tries to deter the younger man from the path that will lead to murder, debauchery, and other piratical pass times.

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The question is, why does Ignacio cry at this point? My reading was that his tears were not provoked by any sense of empathy for what his younger self is about to experience, but rather the overwhelming emotional release of finally reaching the moment for which he has labored

his entire adult life. He's crying because he is finally going back to Novia. Chris is nothing to Ignacio beyond a necessary cog in the mechanism that will take him back and allow him to reunite with her.

Marc Aramini — 18 Dec 2007, 14:41 · in reply to paul witcover

--- paul witcover <gdeonn at yahoo.com> wrote:

The question is, why does Ignacio cry at this point?

Chris is nothing to Ignacio beyond a necessary cog in the mechanism that will take him back and allow him to reunite with her.

In the last decade and a half I have noticed an increasingly sentimental nature in Wolfe's characters, an absence of the sinister silences we see in 5HOC and Peace and New Sun or his shorter work that makes us say, jeez, this guy is creepy. Chris might be an ineffectual apologist for the "environment" of the brutal past forcing his hand, but if he elides facts it just doesn't seem overtly sinister, despite his embraced piracy.

The worst thing Silk ever did was right at the end of the Sun cycle, when he kicked the inhumans to death. Able was at worst a bully and at best a hero. Ignacio is one cold dude if he could contribute to his own worst moments while still doing things like buying chickens and letting his younger self steal them.

I need to read it again, I guess. As always.

Dave Lebling — 18 Dec 2007, 15:47 · in reply to paul witcover

Ignacio as an older Chris, laboring diligently to create exactly the Chris he was as a young man, makes an interesting and creepy contrast to the life of Severian, molded by the hierodules, possibly more than once, to be a better man (or perhaps a worse - he is a mass murderer, after all) than the rough torturer he started out as.

Chris is a child of privilege (in a Mafia family, of course) whose life, looked at from his own selfish point of view, works out nearly perfectly until he loses Novia. His older self works for years to recreate his younger self, so that the younger self will not deviate from the life he previously led, thereby recreating the older self that creates the younger self.

Contrast this with the narrator of 5HoC, who is trying to recreate himself in a cloned body, and has been working on this project for generations with debatable success. Clearly Ignacio/Chris is aware that his project is risky and easily knocked off course (for example, he worries about the repercussions that might ensue if he visited himself when Chris still lived in "Jersey").

The perfectly choreographed life Chris leads from the time he enters the monastery is not "pirate freedom," it is a prison he puts himself into and can only break out of if his plan succeeds (or as Paul Witcover wrote, a machine in which Chris is just a cog). So, "pirate

freedom" isn't freedom at all. Maybe that's why Ignacio is crying: after all that work, he thinks he is finally going to be free. Of course, there may be another still older Chris/Ignacio tugging the puppet strings.

-- Dave Lebling, aka vizcacha

From: urth-bounces at lists.urth.net [mailto:urth-bounces at lists.urth.net] On Behalf Of paul witcover
Sent: Tuesday, December 18, 2007 8:23 AM