

HOME FIRES finished thoughts (spoilers)

The Urth list — 8 messages, 4 voices, 20 Aug 2013

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6422>

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Brian Doherty — 20 Aug 2013, 21:51

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This seems to me to be a Wolfe novel that's received the least detailed discussion of mysteries/meaning. If someone can guide me to source for same, would appreciate it.

Brian Doherty

Brian Doherty — 21 Aug 2013, 00:09 · in reply to Brian Doherty

Couple of other HOME FIRES questions: I gather from end that Chelle fragged a commander, but I don't see how this relates to what happens to her---you merely get discharged for that? Or was she killed for it before the Sims meld? Is this even the "original" Chelle's body? I mean, reaction of her old school friend and Skip indicate it is....

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What would people say the theme/point of the novel is? The tenacity of love? The fragility of identity? Or the tenacity of identity?

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 21 Aug 2013, 00:53 · in reply to Brian Doherty

Or maybe the fragility of tenacity?

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Originally I wanted to make a case that the guns in the voodoo ceremony represented certain characters. I am certain now the officers gun Chelle chooses indicates that Jane Sims is the dominant compassionate one left in her body. Chelle acts to save not Skip but Sim's old flame. The secret was a weapon of some kind the various spy circles want, something of some immediate application in a world where trains travel at like thirty miles an hour.

She had to execute a spy who was the best noncom she knew. Skip is also an unknowing spy run by Coleman Baum-Charles Blue- Chet Burton. Skip kills his investigator Zygment with his spy cell. This is why Chelle dwells on the gifts Skip would bring - what would be behind them? No one knows themselves. The theme is that everyone is lost.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 20, 2013, at 5:53 PM, "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:
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Marc Aramini — 21 Aug 2013, 01:30 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

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I'm not sure at all that this Charles Blue is Chelle's father. The old one was a fat, easily controlled man. This one is thin and in command. Skip runs into him AT LEAST two times on the ship, and at one point the old man and Skip talk about the?os and if they could just blow up one planet to win them all (thus the Sims weapon to destroy the world) or something to that effect. This is on page 57 and the man he is talking to is definitely Blue. He also runs into him much later in the looking for Jerry scene.

There is also the important discussion of how certain Asian spy groups don't even know that they are spies. This is almost certainly why Skip forgets the name of the man wearing Asian pants/shoes who runs the pawn shop or whatever where Chelle's mom gets the blade and why he can't remember running into "Blue" over and over.

Marc Aramini — 21 Aug 2013, 01:32 · in reply to Brian Doherty

I made a lot of comments in June

<http://lists.urth.net/pipermail/urth-urth.net/2013-June/thread.html?>

You might want to take a look at a few of the speculations there under the "this week in google alerts" heading

From: Brian Doherty <brianmdoherty at gmail.com>

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2013 5:09 PM

Subject: Re: (urth) HOME FIRES finished thoughts (spoilers)

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Marc Aramini — 21 Aug 2013, 01:43 · in reply to Marc Aramini

also, Sims was a research scientist (physicist?) and made an officer super fast - clearly an important person to some. Perhaps this is why Skip feels so compelled to have Chelle, beyond his youthful romanticism, if he is indeed subconsciously a puppet.

Fernando Gouvea — 21 Aug 2013, 14:13 · in reply to Brian Doherty

I like "the fragility of tenacity" as well. But no novel has a single theme or point.

Wolfe seems to always have something about the nature of love in his novels, and there's something here as well. Skip remembers his past relationship to Chelle as a great romance. He has cultivated and nurtured this memory, and it has grown into something of huge significance for him.

But not Chelle. She remembers a relatively recent childish affair, one that happened not so long ago and has been eclipsed in intensity by whatever happened to her in the war.

So one thing Wolfe is pointing to is the difference between the reality of a loving relationship and our romanticized ideas of what that might be. He echoes that with the distinction between a contract and a wedding, a contracta and a wife.

And this gives us a clue about why Skip goes off to the war at the end. He has realized that somehow the big difference in lived experience needs to be patched up, and, like many Wolfe heroes in love, sets out to bridge whatever differences are there. We are not told whether it will actually work; my guess is that it probably won't.

Of course there's a lot more going on. Wolfe seems to take a basic story (and for all I know it could have been the idea I outlined above) and keeps complicating it more and more, adding wrinkles and mysteries as he goes. There's certainly a distopian element in the book, in which many fears about where we are going are made concrete. It's very close to being a hopeless world. Perhaps this is why being in love with Chelle is so central to Skip's own identity: he has little else left.

Fernando

On 8/20/2013 8:09 PM, Brian Doherty wrote:

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=====

Fernando Q. Gouvea <http://www.colby.edu/~fqgouvea>

Carter Professor and Chair

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Zounds! I was never so bethumped with words since I first called my brother's father dad.

-- William Shakespeare, "King John"