

# 5HC constellations

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 26 May 1998

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m.driussi — 26 May 1998, 05:14

Tania Ruiz,

Thanks for your comments on my notes re the constellations of THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS.

Re: the pinkness of light from the star. Right, there is no such thing (in orthodox astronomy) as a "pink star." (This pink detail is from an observer upon the planetary surface, a world with a breathable atmosphere--he may be comparing the star to Sol rather than an absolute scale.)

"What sets the color of the sky is another thing you can't find easily in textbooks. The blue of the cloudless sky results from scattering by the very molecules in the air. Long wavelengths (red) are scattered much less easily, but short-wavelength blue is scattered all over the sky. Obviously, then, the sky color depends on the available wavelengths--that is, on the color of the star. If the star is, say, red, the sky will look reddish, as there's no blue to scatter. With an orangish sun, the sky may look more greenish than blue. This effect will only appear under extreme cases, however, as even most `red' stars look white to the eye" (Gillett, WORLD-BUILDING, 1996, p. 88).

"A typical `red' dwarf, for example . . . The star's light won't look red at all, and the eye is sufficiently adaptable that scenes will look normal . . . Quite a few science fiction stories have spoken of the lurid light of a red sun . . . But this `local color' is just not true!" (ibid, p. 129).

HOWEVER--not to get into a "what did Wolfe know and when did he know it," nor examine the possible "bad science" of this fiction, rather I'm just pointing at one of these scant clues in the text and wondering if it points toward a non-G type star.

Re: Shadow Child as the Rift, with two bright eyes as Albireo. Interesting point, and I like the use of the Rift, but is Albireo a "naked eye" binary? Peterson Field Guide STARS AND PLANETS notes: "Albireo--Beta Cygni . . . is one of the prettiest doubles. Binoculars split it into orange and blue components."

Re: "Dead Man" (planet) as Mars. I agree, but I didn't mention that (or did I?) because the parallels between the alien star and Sol systems begin to get, well, rather twinning. St. Anne/St. Croix is obviously rather close to Terra/Luna. A planet called "Swift" seems likely in the orbital position of Mercury; "the Dead Man" echoes Mars, the ancient names of which point to "the flayed god"; then there is "the Snow Woman" which sounds enough like Venus (whose brightness and gender could lead to renaming as "Snow Woman").

If it weren't for a character from "Earth" visiting St. A/St. C, I'd be willing to bet that this system was Sol System. Because Wolfe is so fond of tricks like that.

Re: the other star names. Wolfe sometimes just translates star names (Greek/Arabic/Latin) into English: Fomalhaut becomes "the Fish's Mouth" (in TBOTNS) for example. So I keep meaning to

run through some of the famous star names looking for possible leads.

More bits from PLANETS FOR MAN:

"\_Twin planets,\_ revolving about a common center of mass, would have their rotation stopped with respect to each other. It would be interesting to speculate on the intellectual development of a life form on one planet of such a pair. With another planet, close and large, with clouds, oceans, and continents clear to the naked eye, could any egocentric philosophy of the Universe develop? Would the urge to reach the companion hasten technological progress? We can ask but can offer no answer." (Dole, PLANETS FOR MAN [1964], p. 204).

"If the satellite is comparable in mass to the planet itself, there is the possibility that it, too, will be habitable. We will then have twin habitable planets. The dimensions of Roche's limit rise somewhat as the satellite increases in mass, and so does the maximum distance allowed for a month of 96 hours or less.

[mantis note: because the twins are locked face-to-face, it is their rotation around their common center that causes local "days"; and as Dole had determined a 96 hour day as the maximum limit on habitability, this period now transfers to the "month."]

"Such twin habitable planets would have to be separated by a distance of not less than 18,000 miles and not more than 100,000 miles" (ibid, p. 130-131).

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