

Liev's Postpostulate; A Story

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adam louis stephanides — 01 Jun 1998, 15:22

I just finished rereading *_The Fifth Head of Cerberus_*, so the recent turn of the list's collective mind towards that topic is timely for me. In addition to the comments I've posted, I have a couple of questions.

1) V.R.T. in prison writes:

She believed, though she pretended not to, that the Annese have devoured and replaced homo sapiens -- Veil's Hypothesis, and she is Veil; it has been used for years to discredit other heterodox theories about the original population of Sainte Anne. But who, then, *_Tante Jeannine_*, are the Free People? Conservatives who would not desert the old ways? The question is not, as I once thought, how much the thoughts of the Shadow children influence reality; but how much our own do. I have read the interview with Mrs. Blount -- a hundred times while I was in the hills -- and I know who I believe the Free People to be: I call it Liev's Postpostulate. I am Liev and I have left. (254-5 in the Ace edition)

What is Liev's Postpostulate? (Note that V.R.T. appears to reject Veil's Hypothesis.) The fact that "Liev" is "Veil" spelled backwards suggests, of course, that V.R.T. believes the Free People are homo sapiens who have gone native. There's a bit of evidence for this in his quote of Dollo's Law, which states that "An organ which degenerates during evolution never reacquires its original size, and an organ which disappears never reappears; if the offspring return to a mode of life in which the vestigial organ had an important function, the organ does not return to the original state, but the organism develops a substitute" (231) immediately after his explanation that he holds a pen badly because he is unable to write at all when he holds it correctly. This juxtaposition could imply that V.R.T. believes himself descended from ancestors who could hold pens correctly; i.e. humans. Of course, this doesn't explain how the Annese all got green eyes. Nor does it explain how they became shape-shifters, unless the French Lamarckially evolved the ability to escape their persecutors. Or possibly the Annese can't shape-shift at all, aside from the ability of changing one's face V.R.T. attributes to his mother and himself, which acting skill might account for.

A more radical possibility, suggested by the sentence about our thoughts influencing reality, is the V.R.T. believes the Annese to be materialized projections of the colonists' thoughts, as the Old Wise One in "A Story" was a projection of the other Shadow children. Either way, I don't know how Mrs. Blount's story ties in, except for suggesting a tie between the Annese and the French.

2) What is the significance of the second novelette, "A Story"? I realize that it was written by V.R.T., probably in prison, but what is its function in the novel? In particular, what is meant by the portrayal of the Shadow children, with their drug use, their strange naming customs, and

their embodied "Group Norm"? (Not to mention that that the last Shadow child in the pit, who calls down the Earthmen, gives his name as "Wolf"!) A full explication of "A Story" might reveal what "Liev's Postpostulate" is, or vice versa; but as yet it's not clear to me.

--Adam