

prion & 5HoC

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Jul 1998

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Robert Borski — 02 Jul 1998, 14:04

To the newly emerged prion:

Boy, when you lurker virus types come out of the cyberplasm, you do so with vengeance! Welcome to the Cerberus wing of urth. And thanks for the extremely interesting 5H post. It's filled with so many provocative ideas I may not be able to cover everything first time through, but I'll give it my best. (Just when I thought the fever had passed, I have a relapse. Oh well. Damn infections, anyway.)

First, Gene Wolfe (the author) has the first name Eugene

Actually, I believe Gene's first name is just plain monosyllabic 'Gene'--I've never seen it listed anywhere as Eugene, including Mark Ziesing's CASTLE OF THE OTTER, which is where I usually go when I want semi-official biographical info about GW. I could be wrong; regardless I do like the eloquence of your argument.

So, why is she called Jeannine?

This is a very good question and several others besides me have wondered why it isn't Jeannette. Does the -nine aspect of Jeannine relate to the other "numbered" abos we meet (Seven Girls Waiting, Twelvewalker)? Does it somehow relate to the changing, configuration-based names of the Shadow Children? (We have names for groups of 1, 3, 5 and 7, but not 9). Is she a prisoner--the other association we have with numbers? I still have no major theory.

In his essay, Borski says that Jeannine is probably Seven Girls Waiting. I'm not sure, but if she is, maybe Pink Butterfly is Celestine, who wears pink.

I really, really like this idea, and especially its collateral notion--that Celestine Etienne might be an abo! (Yes, folks, that loud noise you hear is alga screaming "fan fiction, fan fiction"). Look, we already know several abos have prostituted themselves (Victor's mother, Cassilla, and possibly the bashful scarred whore at Roncevaux), and as Jeannine states early, David's mother (who I believe Celestine is) was very likely a prostitute. The ability of the shapechanging prostitutes to look younger might therefore account for the youthful appearance of Celestine--Victor estimates her to be 27-28, but if she were actually older, this might remove the legitimate objection Tony Ellis has filed saying she's too young to be David's mother. Dunno, Tony, what do you think?

Aside from naming support, if Jeannine were SGW or a Shadow Child, she could be the source of the information that VRT uses to write A Story, making it more true than false (maybe).

Another very interesting notion I like.

And if she faked her death before, why not again? She may not have died at the end but actually have found some stash of Maitre's (in spite of No. 5's theory). She could then pretend to die and use the money to return to Ste. Anne.

This I'm less sure about, because I do think Maitre has squandered the family fortune; i.e., there is no money to be found. Besides, I like the notion that Jeannine dies of old age, far away from home (a prisoner, yes, of her own fate).

In spite of my support, I have some questions for Borski. You state in your essays on the Cave Canem page that Aunt Jeannine is Seven Girls Waiting, and that she is a Shadow Child. Which is it?

This is a good question. Possibly she's both or neither--it depends on if abo differences are more in the nature of tribal or Linnaean specific. Do we think Masai/pygmy in other words? Or Hutu/Tutsi? Who or what you are may depend on which abo group raises you, Wetlander, Hillmen or Shadow Child. Also remember that the correspondences between "A Story" (a stated work of fiction) and the rest of 5th Head may be as much refractive as reflective. (Note also your own "more true than false" codicil above.)

Part of

what you say to make her a shadow child is that she called up shadow selves to listen to her conversations with Marsch/VRT. As evidence, you say that a copy editor would not let VRT write - her "girls," as she called them_ because it is redundant.

No, I meant Gene Wolfe's copy editor here--and despite the arguments of one of the world's better editors of fiction, I still maintain this redundancy artifice is meant to draw our attention. (Note earlier, when Victor calls the French settlement in the back of beyond, "Frogstown." It's not "so-called 'Frogstown'" or "'Frogstown,' as Victor called it." It's just plain "Frogstown." And yes I know one entry is made by Dr. Marsch, and the other is by Victor.)

If Aunt J is not a Shadow Child, then what do you think the girls are? If she is a Shadow Child, why can she singularly create multiple aquastars when the Old Wise One was formed only from the confluence of two or more minds?

Good question. Perhaps it's easier to create a bunch of tiny aquastars than a knowledgeable old coot. Also consider the Old One is a "group norm" or "average." (Single entries are possible, just not divisible.) Perhaps Jeannine's being abetted by Marsch. Perhaps there really are other prostitutes present and they're abos too--like many of the other hookers in 5HofC. Also keep in mind not everything we're told in "A Story" is absolutely 100% true. In other words I'm still thinking this one through.

Also, in the essays there is some confusing information. You say the original human Aunt Jeannine (who I'll call Eugenia from now on) was the daughter of the original uncloned Gene Wolfe. If that is so, she couldn't be the baby in white being held by a young GW's mother in the picture.

You lost me here. Or me you. Look at my family tree in the appendix of CAVE CANEM. The woman holding baby Jeannine is Rosemary, who's married to the original uncloned Gene Wolfe. She's not the latter's mother--which I think is what you're saying. Or do I still have this confused?

I'd also like to add that as No. 5 was looking at "his" mother in the picture he wondered about her ethnicity (because she didn't have the planetary face of Ste. Croix, because she's not descended from the original GW) and as he pondered, he thought she might have Celtic ancestry from Wales, and says "Wales" aloud. Aunt J doesn't know what he was thinking, and so she only hears him name a country while looking at it. She says he's right. I think she mean that the photo was taken in Wales. The photo is also described as being just white and shades of brown. This always made me seem that it was a very old picture. Just when was the first GW born? Is there some other

explanation for the coloring?

Yes, the photo was taken back on Earth, in Wales. The young parents depicted are Gene & Rosemary Wolfe, holding baby Jeannine (who like Mary Blount will journey across the void to Sainte Anne as an infant). The white and brown shades in the photo are sepia tints--a very popular way of rendering photos still today (it makes them look old-fashioned/neo-artsy).

I'm not sure how much is true in A Story by John V. Marsch, but could Marsch (because it sounds like marsh) have an association with the Wetlanders? I know it seems that he is like Eastwind in the book because of analogies such that he is circumcised and is killed by Sandwalker (who's like VRT). Also, his middle name begins with V and Voltumnus was the Roman god of the east wind.

I like the V-for-Voltumnus/Eastwind notion for the Terran version of Dr. Marsch and the V-for-Victor notion for the Annese version of Marsch. (Thanks for bringing the Voltumnus link to my attention.)

The father of Sandwalker and Eastwind is Bloodyfinger in the story and RT, VRT's father, can't use his hands well and has red hair. Is there any connection you can think of dealing with the fact that Bloodyfinger is drowned by the Wetlanders in A Story?

None that I can think of. But I do note that "bloody fingers" supports my often-held-to-be-crazy-notion about RT sticking his hands under a train so he doesn't have to take the Shovel test and be proved an abo.

Also, this may have no significance at all, but if VRT's name is Victor Roy Trenchard (I think it is), each of his names might stand for one of the people in the St. Anne/St. Croix system. Victor for the English because they defeated the French? French because they defeated the natives? Hillmen because they defeated the Wetlanders? (I think English because it is an English name, but it comes from Latin so I'm not sure). Roy for the Celts who were caught BETWEEN the English and French in the Napoleonic Wars (which are mentioned when Marsch sees RT in the book)? Trenchard for the French?

Actually, I believe mantis has argued something similar to this--can't remember if it was urth or privately--but I do think there is some validity to this approach.

Long ago, one of two things happened. The first is that ancient humans (or probably some other hominid race related to them) from Earth came to Ste. Anne and developed or gave themselves shapechanging abilities (or else no humans came there and the shapechangers are entirely natural native inhabitants). They spent time changing into different things and forgot about Earth.

Perhaps Tony Ellis has something to say about your various speculations concerning Annese evolution and the various migratory waves you posit to and from Ste. Anne. (As someone who holds a degree in the life sciences I favor the convergent evolution theory rather than the pseudo-mythic prehistoric spacefarers riff--perhaps this is also due to the fact I've almost come to blows with "creation scientists.")

In VRT, when VRT writes that he (he actually writes it as if Marsch does it, as he does everything else) killed the cat, maybe Marsch actually killed her and that's why he kills Marsch; the final straw. Or else he just writes that Marsch does so, because it would be consistent with what Marsch would have done if he were alive.

I still hold to my theory in "Marschian Sexuality" that Victor freaks out when Dr. Marsch puts the heavy moves on him and then cuts his throat. I also still believe Victor killed the catgirl in a

moment of Oedipal rage/angst.

Finally, isn't there a book called Cerberus: A Wolf in the Fold?

Somebody recently mentioned another Cerberus book, but I can't find it in the archives. (Seems to me it was French and pulpy???)

That's all.

Classic understatement. Send more soon. As it is I'll have to do quite a bit of revising to CAVE CANEM (sounds of subterranean tunneling--where's that damn sop anyway?).

My thanks again.

scolex/Robert Borski