

Why I Think Pan

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 23 Jul 1997

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m.driussi — 23 Jul 1997, 14:26

Reply: Item #3748604 from URTN at LISTS.BEST.COM@INTERNET#

Nutria,

I think you've already stated all the pieces that made me guess Peter's last name as Pan. First the ending suggests that Peter has a last name older than Palmieri; then the not growing up, the playing pirates, the island, the interaction with a big sister/two brothers.

Re: the island as deathland. Yes, definitely. Just like the shore of the averns; the skiff, the number of passengers threatening to sink the skiff, the space bending, the weird guide.

But as you nearly say, Cassonsville itself is part fairyland. You can only get there by a ride from a denizen. Pete's "welcome" had run out until he got the ride with Ernie Cotha.

And the whole "changeling" mythology is fairy based/driven. A fairy baby or elder is substituted for a human baby--the human baby is taken to work in the fairy labor system (shades of "A Cabin on the Coast") or pollenate the fairies (like Severian in the cave on the island with Apheta in Yesod). After this task is complete, the fairies dispose of the human baby, usually by letting it go back "home" only displaced in time.

Peter Pan obviously has a great deal of fairy to him, which is why I'm so eager to tie him to little Peter Palmieri. Peter Palmieri is the fairy changeling of the title, but like many Wolfe stories, the focus is on paradox, how the human baby goes through an awful lot of changes (making it a "changeling") while the fairy changeling remains unchanged--static. We might also be close to "hero wrestles with his own shadow"; again, Weer vs. Bobby Black, Severian and Apu-Punchau vs. Hildegrin the Badger, (Peter Pan vs. his shadow?).

Hey, good point--twenty-nine year old Pete was supposed to have nocturnal reunion in motel room with thirty-something Maria, leading to marriage, and then eight-year-old Peter could latch onto a new nuclear unit. Nice! The sugar lump (cassons?) for the overworked little burro (note that Pete calls Papa a burro; and that Papa is the only other one who knows about Peter's weirdness), but the burro balks!

Re: "contemptable situation of an able-bodied man living off the gifts of others, who treat him as a guru. Pete has moved into the mentality of Hinduism," well . . . anchorites, cenobites, stylites (sp?); monks, nuns, saints, and martyrs all have a place in Christianity (some branches, at least <g>).

=mantis=

Jim Jordan — 26 Jul 1997, 15:56 · follows m.driussi

Mantis,

Well, I'd completely overlooked the fairy connection with changeling, swapping babies, etc. Sounds exactly right to me. I'll have to read it yet again. Soon I'll have it memorized!

The Peter Paul Mary Mama Papa stuff suggests a church connection, too, and Wolfe likes to conflate stuff. I'll have to see if it will work out.

BTW: Wolfe says that the old man is dead. Whom do you think that means?

Nutria