

Little, Big: fairy blood and fairy logic

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 03 May 2000

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Adam Stephanides — 03 May 2000, 10:32

Jim Jordan wrote:

alga wrote:
JC doesn't flat
out say, "Hey, Vi was a fairy!" but why would he give us the backstory and
the chart otherwise?

Because, among other things, the book is a family saga. And because it adds a temporal depth and richness to the book to know how the Drinkwaters got where they are, and how the Tale began. (Besides, the "backstory" contains some of Crowley's best writing.) On my previous readings of the book I never felt the chart and backstory were intrusive, and I never suspected the Drinkwaters of having fairy genes.

Why would he have August go on a spending spree (I use
the word in its old-fashioned sense--no, not spree) among the local girls
otherwise?

Again, it's clear that the fairies want there to be as many Drinkwaters as possible. It doesn't follow from this that the Drinkwaters have fairy genes.

[Me]:

I don't think there are meant to be logical explanations for all these
things. At any rate, that seems to be the meaning of Mrs. Underhill's
speech to Eigenblick in "Give Way, Give Way" (Book Six, Chap. Five), the
gist of it is that there are no explanations, it's just the way the
world is.

Alga:

Yes, I keep on about this too. This isn't a tidy kind of book. Many of the
most interesting books are not too tidy.

Nutria:

Dunno. He worked on it for a long time. Rather than setting something
aside as untidy, I'd assume the opposite.

What I, and presumably alga, meant, is not that Crowley was just making things up as he went along, but that Crowley didn't mean everything in the book to have a neat logical explanation (unlike BOTNS, or at least unlike what we hope BOTNS will prove to be). Ironically, I think alga herself is over-rationalizing the fairies' actions, with her genetic explanations for various events. I think that a lot of what the fairies do is motivated not by cause-and-effect logic, but by the Tale: it's necessary to the fairies' plan, for some reason, that the Tale be carried out. Moreover, we know that not everything that happens was foreseen by the fairies, although it all becomes part of the Tale: they didn't plan on Lilac stealing Sophie's sleep ("That's the Lot," IV, 1); they didn't count on Auberon falling in love with Sylvie, and they didn't originally plan for Sylvie to join the Drinkwaters in the fairies' country ("Let Him Follow Love, IV, 3).

In another post alga asks what, if not the desire to reproduce, is behind the fairies' concern with the Drinkwaters? The problem with this is that the fairies don't show any consciousness of the

Drinkwaters being a continuation of their race. In fact, once the fairies themselves have gone inward, they will apparently have no further contact with the Drinkwaters. (And to revert to a logical viewpoint, if the fairies' goal is to spread their genes, wouldn't it be simpler and quicker to just mate with as many humans as possible, rather than arrange one human-fairy marriage and wait a century for its descendants?)

The ulterior motive behind the fairies' meddling with the Drinkwaters is not reproduction, I would argue, but survival. For some reason, the Drinkwaters have to cross over into the fairies' country in order for the fairies to be able to go further inward themselves, and take refuge from the humans. Perhaps, though this is just a guess, the substitution even has to be one-to-one, which would explain why there are fifty-two fairies and fifty-two Drinkwaters.

--Adam