

Wolfe and Crowley, ancient and Renaissance

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 09 May 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2250>

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Adam Stephanides — 09 May 2000, 08:54

The Tarot discussion got me wondering whether Wolfe ever alludes to the Tarot. I couldn't recall his doing so at all. Then it occurred to me that not only does Wolfe ignore completely, iirc, the whole field of Renaissance magic which so fascinates Crowley; aside from the anomaly of THE DEVIL IN A FOREST, he pretty much ignores the whole of medieval and Renaissance Europe as a source of allusion or intellectual background (I would tend to see the Arthurian backdrop of CASTLEVIEW as a reference to myth in general, rather than medieval Europe in particular, and the same with the Irish legends in PEACE). This strikes me as being unusual for a self-confessed Catholic author and admirer of Chesterton. On the other hand, the classical Greco-Roman world is all over the place: the SOLDIER books, obviously, but also the pseudo-classical gods and goddesses in BOTLS and THERE ARE DOORS; the setting of BOTNS is modeled after the Byzantine Empire, which was contemporaneous with medieval Europe, but which had much less of a break with the ancient world; even the conjurations of the witch in THERE ARE DOORS and in Gold's fake Necronomicon in PEACE seemed to me closer to ancient Greco-Roman magic than to medieval or Renaissance magic, iirc. Of course, it's been a long time since I read most of these, and I don't have copies close at hand, so I could be completely wrong.

On the other hand, while Crowley is fascinated by Renaissance magic, he doesn't ignore the classical world. In fact, the conflict between the two is a minor subtheme of LB: both Smoky and (or so it seems to me) Ariel Hawksquill have minds molded by the classics, though Ariel is of course aware of the Renaissance tradition; and both are made to unwillingly recognize the truth of the Renaissance magic worldview.

--Adam

Jim Jordan — 10 May 2000, 16:30 · follows Adam Stephanides

At 08:54 AM 5/9/00 -0700, you wrote:

On the other hand, while Crowley is fascinated by Renaissance magic, he doesn't ignore the classical world. In fact, the conflict between the two is a minor subtheme of LB: both Smoky and (or so it seems to me) Ariel Hawksquill have minds molded by the classics, though Ariel is of course aware of the Renaissance tradition; and both are made to unwillingly recognize the truth of the Renaissance magic worldview.

--Adam

Wondering a bit what you meant by that last phrase.

Also, if the fairies are grandchildren of Kronos, then Smoky's classical education, and his love of the stars, would seem again to be pointing in the opposite direction from the fate of the Drinkwaters & Co. As there is a hierarchy of worlds/spheres here, it seems that there is a world larger than the one in which the House is situated. Which I gather would revise Mantis's scheme of the system of worlds....

Nutria

Adam Stephanides — 12 May 2000, 09:06 · follows Jim Jordan

Nutria wrote:

At 08:54 AM 5/9/00 -0700, [Adam] wrote:

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Wondering a bit what you meant by that last phrase.

I guess I didn't mean anything very precise; I was conflating "the Renaissance magic worldview" with belief in the existence and importance of the fairies. Ariel may or may not be aware of the fairies' existence at the start, but until almost the end, she regards them and their "small worlds" as a sideshow compared to Eigenblick's activities. I still think it's significant that both Smoky and Ariel are classically trained, but I'd probably have to reread the whole book to figure out how.

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Now I'm not sure what you mean. If the fairies are grandchildren of Kronos, then they are probably children of the gods.

--Adam