

Holly Hollander's novel

The Urth list — 2 messages, 1 voices, 10 Oct 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/226>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Derek Bell — 10 Oct 1997, 16:26

Warning, spoilers ahead!!

Last warning!

Disclaimer, this is from memory, so take it with a few shovelfuls of sal if you like.

In message <199710091915.MAA29588 at lists1.best.com>, Sgt. Rock writes:

I just finished PANDORA, by HOLLY HOLLANDER. This is either the simplest, most straight-forward thing Wolfe has written, or I must have missed a bunch of stuff. In fact, if it's a conventional "whodunnit" as it appears to be on the surface, then it's fairly pedestrian--I guessed the conclusion about halfway through. I was expecting to be confuted by a typically twisted Wolfean ending...

OK, my opinion is it is an allegory about love: consider the various relationships in the story: Holly's grandparents; Holly's parents; Holly's mother and her lover; Holly and Alladin Blue. Each relationship is based on on different kinds of love, at least from the men's side. Holly's grandfather is jealous and possessive, her father loves her mother, though he is resigned about her being unfaithful and is even willing to take the blame for the bombing to prevent his wife being jailed. Holly's mother and her lover recognise in each other that they are similar: they are both very selfish people.

I have a problem describing Holly and Alladin's relationship; Alladin's character seems strongly outlined by the incident where his leg was broken - his motives are noble, though he, like anyone else, can only do so much before he was intimidated into breaking the law. (In religious terms, I supposed it was his "fall from grace".) Holly's character didn't convince me and I find it hard to describe her, other than she clearly loved her father, wanted to clear his name and discover the real bomber. Maybe it's just the amount of time that's elapsed since I read it.

Tercel

Derek Bell — 10 Oct 1997, 16:36 · follows Derek Bell

In message <199710092129.OAA10832 at lists1.best.com>, Nutria writes:

My own guess is that HH is a "juvenile," like *The Devil in a Forest.* So, perhaps we should not look for anything too deep. There is a kind of semi-allegorical structure to the tale -- the kind of thing Wolfe often does (like "The Man in the Pepper Mill"). Holly's old family is completely breaking down, and she finds a new family, in a house on the edge of town, presided over by a "resurrected" criminal who specializes in crime (sin). With a foot wound, of course.

It struck me that Wolfe had infantile paralysis, otherwise known as poliomyelitis. I think one common symptom is paralysis of the legs; perhaps that's why Wolfe chooses this religious symbol so often - it relates to his own life.

And, there are three (count'em three) men in the new house on the edge of town that becomes Holly's new home. Let's see. One of them is a cook, so he would be the Holy Spirit; and note his name: Muddy Brooks.

^^^^^^^^^^

Say, did he play electric guitar? :-) This book's got loads of Chicago references! I wouldn't put it past Wolfe to deliberately choose a character to have many types of references/connotations: e.g. both religious and Chicago-related.

For instance, "Muddy Brooks" sounds like a thinly disguised variation of "Muddy Waters". And he lives in this house of Blue's!

Tercel, humming "Mannish Boy"