

PEACE: Morryster's _Marvells of Science_

The Urth list — 5 messages, 3 voices, 07 May 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3226>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 07 May 2002, 04:47

Ten months ago, Adam Stephanides wrote:

I was looking over the section where this book appears (211-12, Harper hc) and I have an observation and a question.

First, the observation: the book is introduced with the sentences "There were several books on his table, and I picked one up. It was Morryster's _Marvells of Science_..." (211) Now, this way of phrasing it strongly suggests that Weer is already familiar with the author and title; otherwise, he would say something like "It was entitled _Marvells of Science_," by a man named Morryster. However, the book does not exist: it was invented by Ambrose Bierce in _The Devil's Dictionary_, and the author and title were borrowed by Lovecraft. The copy Weer picks up is one of Gold's forgeries (and since he finds it in Gold's office, we can dismiss the possibility that _Peace_ takes place in a universe in which _Marvells of Science_ does exist.)

Does THE DEVIL'S DICTIONARY (1911) have some reference to that title? In any event, it shows up, with a little quote, in Bierce's short story "The Man and the Snake" (1891). See here <http://www.online-literature.com/bierce/174/> Yes, then Lovecraft used it later, but I've misplaced the note on which story that was.

<snipping a bit>

Next, my question: where does the stuff on Heaven and Hell that Weer ostensibly reads in _Marvells of Science_ come from? It doesn't sound like anything from either of the book's sources (and afaik, Lovecraft only mentions the title without describing the contents). And it doesn't sound like one of Wolfe's own inventions to me. It sounds like the sort of thing that might come from Swedenborg, though I'm no expert, and we know that Swedenborg was at least indirectly an influence on _Peace_. Can anybody verify or refute this?

The quote included in "The Man and the Snake" does not match the direct quote that A. D. Weer reads in the bookstore. (But the quote in the story does sound rather familiar--maybe it is somewhere else inside PEACE?) Further research would be to check if Lovecraft created a quote that was used--this would be a nice "double-decker" forgery.

The indirect quote that Adam refers to is not included in the Bierce story, nor is it germane to that story, yet the story itself is rather germane toward PEACE as a whole, or so it seems to me, and it also seems like the sort of story that Gene Wolfe loves to the point of emulation.

=mantis=

Sirius Fiction

booklets on Gene Wolfe, John Crowley

PEACE: a timeline WITH dates! Come see!

Jerry Friedman — 07 May 2002, 15:25 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

--- Michael Andre-Driussi <mantis at siriusfiction.com> wrote:
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"The
Man and the Snake" (1891). See here
<http://www.online-literature.com/bierce/174/>
Yes, then Lovecraft used it later, but I've misplaced the note on which
story that was.

"The Festival", according to the Invisible Library (which doesn't mention the Bierce story,
though--I'll tell the Librarian about it). How certain is it that the _Marvells of Science_ in _Peace_,
which I'll get around to someday, is another of Gold's forgeries?

Jerry Friedman

Michael Andre-Driussi — 07 May 2002, 22:56 · follows Jerry Friedman

Jerry Friedman wrote:
How certain is it that the _Marvells of Science_ in _Peace_, which
I'll get around to someday, is another of Gold's forgeries?

Well hmmm. It seems as certain as his forgery of THE NECRONOMICON and his forgery of Kate's
diary. As Adam Stephanides noted before, it is a big pointer to the nature of Gold's bookstore as
a place of books so rare as to be impossible: the rising music which crescendos a few pages
later around the more famous and unspoken NECRONOMICON.

(Still hunting for another source to that wonderful "Venus di Milo" story! So haunting, since I

all-but-swore that I'd seen it before, somewhere, just before reading PEACE . . .)

=mantis=

SIRIUS FICTION

booklets on Gene Wolfe, John Crowley

Lexicon Urthus out of print!

<http://www.siriusfiction.com/>

Adam Stephanides — 10 May 2002, 13:46 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

on 5/7/02 10:25 AM, Jerry Friedman at jerry_friedman at yahoo.com wrote:

"The Festival", according to the Invisible Library (which doesn't mention the Bierce story, though--I'll tell the Librarian about it).

Oops--I hadn't noticed this. Sorry, didn't mean to be redundant.

How certain is it that the _Marvells of Science_ in _Peace_, which I'll get around to someday, is another of Gold's forgeries?

Given that:

1) neither the National Union Catalog (hundreds of thick volumes compiling the card catalogs of the Library of Congress and many other libraries), the British Library Catalog, nor Google show any trace of the book's existence;

2) all the other books named in connection with Gold are forgeries (I think); and

3) all the authors Bierce "cites" in the Devil's Dictionary seem to be his inventions,

it's a pretty safe bet that it's a forgery. And there's no reason to think that it isn't Gold's.

--Adam

Jerry Friedman — 10 May 2002, 19:58 · follows Adam Stephanides

--- Adam Stephanides <adamsteph at earthlink.net> wrote:

on 5/7/02 10:25 AM, Jerry Friedman at jerry_friedman at yahoo.com wrote:

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Oops--I hadn't noticed this. Sorry, didn't mean to be redundant.

How certain is it that the _Marvells of Science_ in _Peace_, which I'll get around to someday, is another of Gold's forgeries?

Given that:

1) neither the National Union Catalog (hundreds of thick volumes compiling the card catalogs of the Library of Congress and many other libraries), the British Library Catalog, nor Google show any trace of the book's existence;

This wasn't the part I was worried about. I'm sorry if I put you to trouble I could have gone to myself.

2) all the other books named in connection with Gold are forgeries (I think); and

That's a better clue.

3) all the authors Bierce "cites" in the Devil's Dictionary seem to be his inventions,

it's a pretty safe bet that it's a forgery. And there's no reason to think that it isn't Gold's.

Thanks! So it's in the category of "presumably", not as certain as that Blaithmaic wrote *Lives of the Seventeen Megatherians*, but overwhelmingly more likely than any other possibility. As you've probably guessed, I'm going to let the Invisible Librarian know.

Jerry Friedman