

Llew Llaw Gyffes

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 19 Dec 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3692>

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James Wynn — 19 Dec 2002, 16:12

Well, for most of it, you would have to accept some of my presuppositions about Chenille and Tussah (realizing he was definitely human really opened things up for me) which I've yet to prove. But Silk (like Llew Llaw Gyffes) is grown from a hidden indeterminate mass after the death of Pryderi (who when born was found wearing brocaded silk - chenille). One gets the sense that LLG is Pryderi reborn somehow - although it is never so stated. Actually, if you accept that Pryderi and LLG are "sun heroes" then it is inescapable that they are the same person.

Pryderi's name is said by the Mabinogion to mean "sense" while his father/not-his father Prydain's name is said to mean "head" (a very Vironese naming convention). "Llew Llaw Gyffes" is said to mean "bright lion of the steady hand" which made me immediately think of Silk with his cane. But this name is even better connected to someone else. :)

If you accept certain narrative suspicions I have (which I came by independently), then story of LLG overlays nicely with the story of the family of Tussah.

Yes, Andrew, that riddle was the one to which I was referring. Graves posits that the poem is deliberately "pied" and it is the job of the reader to figure out how. It seems to me that Wolfe has done exactly that with innumerable ancient myths and folklore in the LS/SS.

While I suppose it is possible to make too much of it, it is difficult not to make a lot of it. Every time I examine something, I find another old story moving perpendicular or parallel to the one's I've already seen. It's a kind of "magic square" where the numbers add up the same way up, down, across, and diagonally.

-- Crush

-----Original Message-----

From: Andrew Bollen [mailto:abollen at internode.on.net] Sent: Wednesday, December 18, 2002 11:01 PM To: urth at urth.net Subject: Re: (urth) Trees & transformations

Crush - I just came across your interesting site, and had a couple of questions. In the intro, you say: "[Wolfe has] recreated Gwydion's riddle as exegeted by Robert Graves in his The White Goddess.." I assume you mean "Gwion/Taliesin's" riddle, no? The one which goes:

"An impartial Chief Bard
Am I to Elphin.
My accustomed country
Is the land of the Cherubim.

Johannes the Diviner
I was called by Merddin,

At length every King
Will call me Taliesin.

I was nine months almost
In the belly of the hag Ceridwen;
I was at first little Gwion,
At length I am Taliesin."

etc.

Would love to hear more on this! As far as I can recall, RG's (rather tortured) exegesis is in terms of recreating the tree-alphabet from the answers to the sections of the riddle, and finally a holy-name-of-god. A fair amount of the imagery involved seems to correspond with Wolfe's imagery, but beyond that I am unclear on the connection. Ditto for the connection between Llew and Silk?

...It's obviously possible to make too much of this. Wolfe may borrow or allude to bits & pieces of imagery and thematic fragments, but I see them as mainly "chrome" on the important things - the narrative, the characterization, the moral issues bound up in them.