

Mother/Seawrack/Hyacinth

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 03 Jan 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3739>

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Andrew Bollen — 03 Jan 2003, 07:27

James Jordan had this to say in a post a year ago:

"Wolfe expressed to me that Mother Goddess worship is the essence of paganism. Those weren't his words, but the gist of our conversation. [...] Philosophically, Mother Goddess worship is simply pantheism in action: the universe as Mother Earth is the ultimate thing in existence, so that violence and "evil" are as "natural" as peace and goodness. The true God is the Outsider, the Creature of nature. From Wolfe's standpoint, Mother Earth is created by Father God, and because of human sin, is fallen. Mother has her role, but as a creature of Father. Sin means disorder, while redemption means the restoration of proper order. Paganism means to ultimatize and worship the creation (nature) rather than the Creator."

"Mother Earth" is pretty much the same as "Mother Ocean", in these kinds of speculations.

To repeat my view: Much of SS/LS is the working out of Wolfe's view as outlined by James, versus the "White Goddess" kind of view of Graves and others, in which the Mother is the first principle, and the solar, male, creator-god is her upstart & usurping son. No, says Wolfe, but nevertheless, "Mother has her role" - she is not simply the demon of misogynist imagination.

Some more notes on the text:

- At the end of RTTW, Silk heads off to the stars with Seawrack, Nettle and Marble. As I think others have pointed out, there is a clear resonance here with the Gravesian imagery of the "Hero" (Jesus, Arthur, whoever) ferried off to a paradiscal Avalon after death by the Goddess in her triple aspect of Maiden (in the sense of "young woman"), Mother & Crone, to await rebirth as her son with the coming of the new year. But in Wolfe's co-option of the imagery, Silk is already reborn, and he does not go under the protection of the Goddess to her realm; rather, they go under his protection to the Whorl which he rules in some sense, and ultimately to the stars ruled by the Creator.

- The imagery is not the defeat of the Mother - Silk is not Beowulf, or St George, and she is not Grendel's mother or a monstrous dragon. Rather, it is her *redemption* - Eve saved from sin, Scylla becoming Cilinia, Seawrack no longer a monster's lure, Hyacinth no longer the erotic emissary of Aphrodite etc etc.

- Seawrack and Hyacinth. As many others have said, there is a dimly lit nexus between Hyacinth/Seawrack/Kypris. On one level, a connection via Kypris makes sense, since Kypris is Aphrodite, an aspect of Mother Ocean; and perhaps there is some hint at Venus de Milo. But I just don't see room in the narrative for a real possession of Seawrack by Kypris, or by a ghost of Hyacinth, or whatever. I prefer to see the connection rather in terms of roles: both "things", created or used by the Sea Goddess in an erotic aspect as snares for men, both abused by men, both desperately in need of redemption, one loved by Horn & the other by Silk, in similar kinds of ways.

- In terms of the narrative, I think Silk retrieves Seawrack after his rebirth not in order to start up again with the old jiggedy-jig; I doubt that she goes with him to the Whorl as his mate. Rather, he takes her as recompense for his previous abandonment, to remove her from a world where she is a thing of the Mother more than a real human being, and because she parallels Hyacinth in many ways, so by helping her, he helps Hyacinth's memory.

- Just as I see SilkHorn as a better Silk - strengthened by Horn, more rooted and effective in the real world - so it is possible to see Seawrack as an improved Hyacinth. The final scene has her helping load the boat, despite her missing arm: Hyacinth would have had the vapors if she ever tried anything this practical.

- A side note on Sirens: Thelxepeia and Molpe were names of sirens in some Greek & Roman accounts. Sirens count as sea monsters, so it seems likely to me that Cilinia was not the only one of Typhon's extended brood to worship Abaia and the rest.

- Seawrack and the Mother. Horn says somewhere in OBW that the big riddle is whether the Mother has had a change of heart - releasing Seawrack from her role as lure - or whether she is just moving into Phase II - releasing Seawrack to make her a better lure. It's reasonably clear to me that this "Phase II" would not be more chomping on unfortunate sailors; rather, it would be assuming the role of goddess to the new population of Blue & having them worship her. There is much that is unclear to me about this, but I believe that if Phase II had been the plan originally, it is not by the end of RTTW. Somehow, SilkHorn has performed a reconciliation, as I asserted in a previous post. When Seawrack comes back, it as a human, not as a lure.

- Harking back to the original post by James, I think it is clear what worship of the Mother would lead to. Juturna at the end of UOTNS: "[Abaia] might have destroyed you ... He's tried to tame you instead. Catch Catodon ... cast out his conation. What good? Abaia would make of us a great people."

Googling: "Conation refers to the connection of knowledge and affect to behavior and is associated with the issue of 'why.' It is the personal, intentional, planful, deliberate, goal-oriented, or striving component of motivation, the proactive (as opposed to reactive or habitual) aspect of behavior (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven & Tice, 1998; Emmons, 1986). It is closely associated with the concept of volition, defined as the use of will, or the freedom to make choices about what to do (Kane, 1985; Mischel, 1996). It is absolutely critical if an individual is successfully engage in self-direction and self-regulation."

In other words, the freedom of will which makes morality possible. Abaia's offer is the living hell experienced by the Ascians. I imagine Wolfe's view is that in a pantheistic universe, morality is irrelevant, and volition essentially meaningless. Catodon is probably *Physeter catodon*, the giant sperm whale - I suppose the point being that despite the whale's huge brain, it differs fundamentally from humans in lacking conation.

- My guess at a history of the VP: A parallel to the war between the Ascians (on Blue) and the Commonwealth (on Green); the Commonwealth analog ultimately destroying both parties by misuse of inhumane assistance.

StoneOx17 — 03 Jan 2003, 13:24 · follows Andrew Bollen

Andrew Bollen <abollen at internode.on.net> writes

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<snip>

This is a beautiful analysis, and I suspect that some of these views of Wolfe on the Mother Goddess also apply to *There are Doors* -- in which our world is represented by the land and the goddess's by the sea !!! One of the names the goddess goes by in TAD is Lara Morgan. I googled and found that the meaning of Morgan is "of the sea". This relation of the goddess with ocean is a recurring theme of Wolfe's.

-- Stone Ox