

RTTW Chras writings

The Urth list — 11 messages, 4 voices, 06 Jan 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3746>

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Andrew Bollen — 06 Jan 2003, 16:11

I missed a Chras quote from RTTW when I posted on this topic previously. In the scene where SilkHorn assists with the sacrifice in Viron, we get this passage:

"A simple way would be to admit that myth is neither irresponsible fantasy, nor the object of weighty psychology [etc] ..."

Anybody know where this comes from? Google has let me down.

It reads like something which could be in the Introduction to Graves' "The Greek Myths" (lost my copy years ago), but I guess there are many other possibilities.

Josh Geller — 06 Jan 2003, 17:25 · follows Andrew Bollen

On Tue, 7 Jan 2003, Andrew Bollen wrote:

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"The Greek Myths" (lost my copy years ago), but I guess there are many other possibilities.

Could easily be "Hamlet's Mill".

J.

James Wynn — 07 Jan 2003, 14:26 · follows Josh Geller

A -->quick<-- scan of the introduction to "The Greek Myths" did not find this one. Nor did I find it in Graves' introduction to Bullfinch's "The Fabled Age." The more I think about it, the less it sounds like something Graves would say.

I didn't find it in Frazer's "The Golden Bough," albeit I was only scanning it still, it is surely post-Jungian considering the "psychology" reference. I really really wanted to find it in C.S. Lewis' "Myth Became Fact" but it's not there. But Lewis talks a lot about the meaning, purpose, and value of myth so there is a lot of places to look there. Hmmm, I didn't check Tolkien's essay introducing "Leaf by Niggle."

So ends (for now) my determined search for this quote.

-- Crush (who is hoping hoping hoping it is not a quote from Joseph Campbell)

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

From: Andrew Bollen [mailto:abollen at internode.on.net] Sent: Monday, January 06, 2003 10:11

AM To: urth at urth.net Subject: (urth) RTTW Chras writings

I missed a Chras quote from RTTW when I posted on this topic previously. In the scene where SilkHorn assists with the sacrifice in Viron, we get this passage:

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Andrew Bollen — 08 Jan 2003, 11:20 · follows James Wynn

Crush the sleuth writes:

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Those were the kind of places I'd been thinking of, too & I agree - *please* let it not be Campbell! I think C.S. Lewis is a good bet.

The second sentence starts: "It [myth] is wholly other ..." That "wholly other" phrase is suggestive, being apparently a common term in in theology for the Godhead. It seems to be most closely associated with the writing of Rudolf Otto, esp. "Idea of the Holy". This is a work which influenced C.S. Lewis, who of course saw Christianity as being a myth of the same kind as the classical myths, except for being *true*. For Lewis et al, and maybe Wolfe, it would seem that the territory of myth is the same numinous, wholly other realm inhabited by the Godhead.

This from a commentary site on Otto:

"The Natural mystery indicates a secret or a mystery that is alien to us, incomprehensible, and unexplained. Like Sherlock Holmes, we may clear up this level of natural mystery. Religious mystery is of a higher order. It can never be solved, cleared up or otherwise resolved. It is in some sense Wholly Other, something "which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, which therefore falls quite outside the limits of the 'canny', and is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment." One frequent response is the human attempt to rationalize or explain away the Mystery with theories. This transforms Mystery into a problem. Otto points out that this is invalid: "The truly mysterious object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently 'wholly other', whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb." Mystery is something we can feel, "without being able to give it clear conceptual expression."

And this brief commentary on a work by John Crossan (of all people) kind of ties things together:

Myth ... is rooted in extra-ordinary encounters with that which is Wholly Other than the world as we know it. When we read of the Paradise that is in Eden from which we are barred by "the cherubim and a perpetually revolving, flaming sword" (Gen 3:24), we know that the writer speaks of a realm that is Other, the Garden of God from which man has been expelled. By definition, this place cannot be found in our world. This does not say, however, that Paradise is not actual; merely that it does not exist in the world of objects around us the way women baking bread do

Josh Geller — 08 Jan 2003, 12:11 · follows Andrew Bollen

I really do think it is from "Hamlet's Mill".

Anyone who enjoys Gene Wolfe's fiction owes it to themselves to read Hamlet's Mill.

J.

On Wed, 8 Jan 2003, Andrew Bollen wrote:
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Andrew Bollen — 08 Jan 2003, 14:30 · follows Josh Geller

Josh wrote:

I really do think it is from "Hamlet's Mill".

Anyone who enjoys Gene Wolfe's fiction owes it to themselves to read Hamlet's Mill.

Tks - I'll check it out if I can find a copy.

As an aside: I think the hacks who put together the Chras writings would have had an abundance of material to work with. There's a snippet in UOTNS which I think reveals that Typhon was the ruler of Cyriaca's tale, who founded the library of Nessus. The doctor in the Typhon-era version of the Matachin Tower, to Severian: "This coast is quake-prone, as the old records indicate clearly enough - praise to our monarch, by the way, for having them brought here ...".

James Wynn — 08 Jan 2003, 17:14 · follows Andrew Bollen

Andrew Bollen wrote:

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Crush epiphanys:

I just realized that Adam and Eve were separated from the Garden by a
whorl!!!

That is, a "perpetually revolving sword." The Hebrew used here is "haphak" which according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance means "to turn about or over" and by implication "to pervert." Sounds like our Whorl.

-- Crush (with his imagination working overtime)

James Wynn — 08 Jan 2003, 20:47 · follows James Wynn

Josh Geller adamanted:

I really do think it is from "Hamlet's Mill".

Anyone who enjoys Gene Wolfe's fiction owes it to themselves to read Hamlet's Mill.

Crush probes:

What in this work makes you think of this quote? I'm not familiar with "Hamlet's Mill", but I'm interested now.

Maybe you're right, but I've been increasingly thinking...Chesterton.

-- Crush

Josh Geller — 08 Jan 2003, 21:12 · follows James Wynn

The book is called "Hamlet's Mill: An Essay Investigating Myth And The Frame Of Time", and it is by Giorgio di Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, who were professors of the history of science at MIT and Goethe Universitaet, Frankfurt respectively.

I will perhaps try to explain what it is about at another time.

J.

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Andy Robertson — 08 Jan 2003, 21:13 · follows Josh Geller

Chesterton is an obvious root of Wolfe's writing.

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

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at HotPOP.com>

Maybe you're right, but I've been increasingly thinking...Chesterton.

-- Crush

James Wynn — 09 Jan 2003, 15:43 · follows Andy Robertson

Crush wrote:

Maybe you're right, but I've been increasingly thinking...Chesterton.

Andy Robertson added:

Chesterton is an obvious root of Wolfe's writing.

Crush concurs:

True. And Chesterton frequently wrote on myth AND contemporary psychology.