

Hyacinth Not A Boy

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 12 Mar 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3894>

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.

Josh Geller — 12 Mar 2003, 02:31

On Wed, 12 Mar 2003, Che Monro wrote:

Perhaps those who see more clearly can help me with a little detail that I have worried loose and wish to see where it leads, if anywhere?

In Return to the Whorl Silk seems to have a song on his mind a lot it goes in part (like this):

These young girls live to deceive you,
Sad experience teaches me.

I wish I knew what the tune was like so that I could try filking this song.
I bet that Gene Wolfe had a tune in mind.

Mostly, however, I wonder what deception the girl in the song was practicing. Could it be that the girl was really a boy dressing up and deceiving the singer?

When I met Gene Wolfe at the last WorldCon, I mentioned this theory to him, and that there were people who supported it on this mailing list.

His response - which was not in any way ambiguous - was to say "It is probably a good thing that I am not on that mailing list."

It is important to keep in mind the fact that every story has at least two authors.

.

James Wynn — 13 Mar 2003, 14:27 · follows Josh Geller

Regarding the "male hyacinth" theory, Josh Geller said:

When I met Gene Wolfe at the last WorldCon, I mentioned this theory to him, and that there were people who supported it on this mailing list.

His response - which was not in any way ambiguous - was to say "It is probably a good thing that I am not on that mailing list."

It is important to keep in mind the fact that every story has at least two authors.

Crush responds:

That's an unambiguous answer? Well, maybe for Wolfe it is. Less so, I'd say, than "Urth is green," and you know how far that has gotten us. I've never spoken to Wolfe, but based on his answers to direct questions from this list, I recommend all beware of "unambiguous" answers from that Delphic oracle.

As I said recently, I no longer hold to this theory for purely thematic reasons. However, IF I were **what some consider to be** a purely "text evidence" reader...

(that is, to presume:

- o All characters are telling the truth
- o No characters are wrong in observations
- o All things are as they are presented
- o Ignore extra-textual plot-lines regardless of how closely they may seem to follow the story unless the narrator says otherwise)

...then, I would still hold this theory.

Since every story, as you say, "has two authors", that is true even when the reader decides he will only read into the text the literal meaning of every word. Since no original author can write that way (language and story being, in part, metaphors), to read in such a way changes the text as well.

Keeping this law "in mind", does not deliver the reader from it, but it can fool a reader into thinking he has -- like a man who dreams he has awoken from a dream.

-- Crush

Josh Geller — 13 Mar 2003, 15:53 · follows James Wynn

On Thu, 13 Mar 2003, James Wynn wrote:

Regarding the "male hyacinth" theory, Josh Geller said:

When I met Gene Wolfe at the last WorldCon, I mentioned this theory to him, and that there were people who supported it on this mailing list.

His response - which was not in any way ambiguous - was to say "It is probably a good thing that I am not on that mailing list."

It is important to keep in mind the fact that every story has at least two authors.

Crush responds:

That's an unambiguous answer?

The words might perhaps be ambiguous.

His manner, vocal tone and body language made it unambiguous.

This is why I was careful to add the words between the - -.

Well, maybe for Wolfe it is. Less so, I'd say, than "Urth is green," and you know how far that has gotten us.

That one is perfectly clear, I think.

I've never

spoken to Wolfe, but based on his answers to direct questions from this list, I recommend all beware of "unambiguous" answers from that Delphic oracle.

Perhaps you should, then.

.

Charles Reed — 14 Mar 2003, 05:18 · follows Josh Geller

Just a couple of thoughts about "text-evidence" readers:

Crush responds:

That's an unambiguous answer? Well, maybe for Wolfe it is. Less so, I'd say, than "Urth is green," and you know how far that has gotten us. I've never spoken to Wolfe, but based on his answers to direct questions from this list, I recommend all beware of "unambiguous" answers from that Delphic oracle.

As I said recently, I no longer hold to this theory for purely thematic reasons. However, IF I were **what some consider to be** a purely "text evidence" reader...

(that is, to presume:

- o All characters are telling the truth

A "text evidence" reader would hold no such view if the text indicated that the character were lying or speaking something false out of ignorance.

- o No characters are wrong in observations

Same comment. If the text shows that a character is wrong in his observations, then that's what it shows. If there is no textual evidence for a character's observations being wrong, though, then the "text evidence" reader would accept such statements as true. It's a generally positive view of humanity, I suppose, to believe what a character says until proven (proven by the text) otherwise, but I find that such an outlook serves me well.

- o All things are as they are presented

Now you're verging on slandering those of us who prefer to analyze the text on its own merits first and foremost. We're very much aware that many things are not as they are presented, and that we must dig deep and think hard -- about the text -- to figure out what's really going on behind the "false presentation." Just because we don't rush out to see how Wolfe's work aligns with Robert Graves or with some Greek/Egyptian/Whatever myth, that doesn't mean that we're lazy readers, or that we don't think deeply about what's going on. It also doesn't mean that we're accepting of every bit of drivel that happens to come from the narrator's pen as God-ordained absolute truth. You're painting with a recklessly broad brush, Crush, and I hope that you're at least mostly kidding.

- o Ignore extra-textual plot-lines regardless of how closely they may seem to follow the story unless the narrator says otherwise)

This is the only accurate "text-first" characterization that you've made.

Charles