

My boy Hyacinth and Textual Analysis

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 14 Mar 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3899>

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.

James Wynn — 14 Mar 2003, 17:01

Charles Reed admonishes:

Now you're verging on slandering those of us who prefer to analyze the text on its own merits first and foremost.

Crush tries to mend some bridges:

Looking at the way my e-mail ended up finally being formatted (after conversion to pure text) I see my bullets suggest a different thrust than I originally intended.

What I intended was:

"

o All characters are telling the truth unless the narrator says otherwise
o No characters are wrong in observations unless the narrator says otherwise o All things are as they are presented unless the narrator says otherwise o Ignore extra-textual plot-lines regardless of how closely they may seem to follow the story unless the narrator says otherwise
" Does that approach a fair analysis? Perhaps there is still some hyperbole there. I certainly haven't discoursed with anybody on this list that I would call a 'lazy reader'. But it is not hyperbole to say that I latched on to the "male-Hyacinth" theory solely from clues in the text, and that I now consider it to have been a mistake for purely thematic reasons.

And since I find myself serendipitously discoursing with you, Charles, and since the posting of mine that you referenced regarded the surety of Wolfe's "unambiguous" answers, I think it is a good time talk about how important it is for one to count his change when Wolfe is being "clear".

For that purpose I'd like to bring up the "Quetzal on Urth" theory that you so long ago smote. This was the text:

Here's a quote of interest from that transcript for everybody that's been following this Quetzal-on-Urth discussion:

Question: In the Long Sun books, is Quetzal the only one of his kind on the Whorl? Was he an original passenger or a late arrival?

Gene Wolfe: He was a late arrival. He is not the only one of his kind, but the Inhumani are rare on the Whorl.

I still believe it to be relatively clear from the text that Quetzal is a late boarder, but maybe this will convince some of the doubters.
Crush, don't you have to give in now? Or do you believe Gene Wolfe to be so sadistic as to outright lie about his own books?

I conceded then, but I must confess to recidivism. Quetzal was never on Urth but Wolfe's answer does not preclude **any** Inhumani being there. I thick-headedly associated only Quetzal with Dionysus when of course I was aware that it is the entire race that Wolfe has so associated.

You no doubt assume he was being frank. I do not and I point out that he promised to try to dodge questions. Does it not bother you that with the large number of terse and obviously ambivalent answers he gave, that for this one, he relatively droned on and on?

Now I recommend you get Graves' "The Greek Myths" and look up the entry entitled 'Midas'. Read the first section and tell me that is not the story of the Whorl.

I've explained, how Quetzal and Typhon are the 'two horned ones' mentioned by Graves and other Wolfean sources. So I ask you this? Why did Quetzal plant a tamarind tree under his window? Of all the trees he could have planted, why that? Well, darn it there are a lot of reasons, but to reference one important reason, I recommend you check out the South Asian version of the "Midas-receiving-donkey-ears" story. In that story, the King grows ****horns****. Oops! Nevermind, I googled for it:

<http://www.vrindavan.org/vrindakunja/sukamr/english-amrita/Trees.htm>

So, independently, I've rummaged around and followed several trails to the same place, all leading to Dionysus and Midas, with the same characters and critters popping up in the same roles. This is DEFINITELY thematic rather than textual analysis, but it is based on names, choices and clues provided by Wolfe. I'm not writing my own novel here.

And while it's appealing to me to use Noah to connect Quetzalcoatl with Dionysus (through the Inhumt) I would never have considered it until I saw how closely Wolfe was following Graves' retelling of Midas. What are the odds, that it is all coincidental, really.

As it is, I just can't see any point in waiting for Wolfe to break down and confess; I think the evidence is all there.

Hmmm. On the other hand there is the Neighbors....

;-)

-- Crush

Lisa Schaffer-Doggett — 15 Mar 2003, 01:56 · follows James Wynn

On Friday, March 14, 2003, at 09:01 AM, James Wynn wrote:

So, independently, I've rummaged around and followed several trails to the same place, all leading to Dionysus and Midas, with the same characters and critters popping up in the same roles. This is DEFINITELY thematic rather than textual analysis, but it is based on names, choices and clues provided by Wolfe. I'm not writing my own novel here.

And while it's appealing to me to use Noah to connect Quetzalcoatl with Dionysus (through the Inhumt) I would never have considered it until I saw how closely Wolfe was following Graves' retelling of Midas. What are the odds, that it is all coincidental, really.

As it is, I just can't see any point in waiting for Wolfe to break down and confess; I think the evidence is all there.

Don offers his opinionated opinion:

It is relatively easy to see Graves in Wolfe because of his relative unorthodoxy regarding myths and their connections. I'm not saying that Wolfe is rewriting Graves, nor is he falling into allegory (it is obvious that the needs of story are paramount to all other elements) but the Sun books are steeped in Gravesian symbolism and it is a very useful tool.