

Well use a thaddle, thilly!

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 13 May 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4004>

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Nigel Price — 13 May 2003, 12:37

I thought that the "The Tree is my Hat" barrel was empty, but it turns out that there are just a few more last dry scrapings to be got out. Here goes.

The shark is a hammer-head. In some mythologies, for example Norse, the thunder god makes thunder by hitting an anvil with a hammer. At the end of Wolfe's story, the shark disappears into a thunder-head. This juxtaposition of hammer and thunder made me listen again to see if any of the significant meetings between Baden and Hanga take place on a Thursday ("Thor's Day"), but although we get dates from Baden's journal, we don't get days. Without knowing the year in which the story is set, this doesn't get us anywhere. I'm not sure what it would add, anyway, but it was an interesting detail...

Thanks to Josha and Mournings Glory for further particulars on the medicinal use of arsenic.

It did occur to me when I was transcribing the end of the story last night that Wolfe's interest in the dramatic use of the last words of people on aircraft before they crash might well have been prompted by Patrick O'Leary's references to the subject in both his short story "23 Skidoo" and his wonderful novel The Impossible Bird. In both instances, Patrick has someone play the tape from an aircraft's "black box" flight recorder which records the crew's last words before a crash. It's interesting to compare Patrick's dialogue with Wolfe's monologue. Here's the end of the "recording" used in "23 Skidoo":

"Wait!"
"No!"
"God!"
"No!"
"F**K!"
"God!"
"NOOO!"
A pause)"
A whisper. "Mom, I love you."

"(Silence)"

OK, not an exact match, but some slight similarities? Remember that Wolfe contributed an introduction to Other Voices, Other Doors, the anthology in which "23 Skidoo" appears, and has certainly read and referred to The Impossible Bird.

Finally...

One of my many old started-then-abandoned messages to the list collated previous references on the list to TTimH. I found the message lying abandoned in my Drafts folder and had another look at it. As well as quotations from John Barach (Thu, 21 Mar 2002 15:12:58 -0700), Michael Andre-Driussi (Thu, 16 Sep 1999 13:42:48), and the already quoted comments from Robert Borski (Sun, 28 Apr 2002 13:52:15 -0500), there was also this contribution from Roy C. Lackey

(Mon, 27 Sep 1999 21:17:11)...

From a local reviewer--Michael Barrett--
of the anthology _999_ in the _San Antonio
Express-News_, Sunday, September 26, 1999:

"The Tree Is My Hat" by Gene Wolfe, better
known as a science fiction writer -- A vivid
Polynesian island tale about a man with a
debilitating disease and the ghost or dwarf or
something-or-other who befriends him as a blood
brother. Full of strange, unexplained details
that one feels must mean more than Wolfe is
telling us.'

Yeah, sounds like Wolfe.

I should have left it at that, shouldn't I?

I think that that really is it. All that remains now is to see whether I can drag myself through
finishing my uncompleted essays on "The Death of Doctor Island" and "Tracking Song"...not to
mention my paper on TBotNS for Jonathan...

Nigel

PS A while back, Jonathan Laidlow wrote...

While currently in my "I have no brain and I must
scream" phase I would just like level the charges at
Price: folky *and* hippy!

Guilty as charged, M'lud.

(Did you see that brilliant documentary about Richard Thompson on BBC 4 recently? I've just
been watching a tape someone lent me. Was that just a drop-D tuning on "Vincent Black
Lightning 1953" or was he using DAGDAD? Ooops, sorry, Ranjit! Forgot myself there for a
moment.)

How can we let him continue in this list?

By an appeal to grace rather than law, I suspect.

Alright alright, we contain multitudes and all that,
I'll go back to the (for shame!) Star Wars novel I'm
currently reading, and we'll forget I ever edited a GW
website.... Do I get expelled for enjoying reading
pulp fiction?

What about *writing* it??? I've recently discovered that there are contributors to the Urth list
who are official published *writers* of Star Wars stories. Compared with that, merely reading
the stuff seems a pretty mild offence...

Che Monro — 14 May 2003, 01:51 · follows Nigel Price

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contributors to the Urth list who are official published *writers* of Star
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Giggles I have written Pern fiction.

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