

A Knight question

The Urth list — 10 messages, 5 voices, 02 Nov 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4512>

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transient — 02 Nov 2005, 05:05

Hello, brand new rabid Wolfe fan here (just discovered him last year, I've read like 17 of his books since). I've been browsing the archives here for a few months and I'd like to say thanks back through time to all for the enlightening posts over the years.

Here's a quick Knight question I don't think I've seen posted before: While Grengarm was dying, Able says that he opened his mouth and then something about "things which had been hidden were revealed to me."

I am assuming that Grengarm showed him a face inside of his mouth, as Setr opening his mouth and speaking to Able with Garceg's face. So who was Grengarm's inner face? Did I miss something that was actually stated, or was this maybe, something he had forgotten while in Aelfrice the first time, but would soon forget again anyways, once he was kissed by the Valkyrie?

Thanks!

Chris — 02 Nov 2005, 22:26 · in reply to transient

I am pretty sure I am not inventing this idea myself - though I didn't find it in a cursory search of the archives - but one semi-obvious way to look at the layered worlds in the Knight is as a sort of map of the human mind, a sort of psychological theater. I couldn't tell you where to find it, but I am pretty sure that I've read someone, somewhere, present this as a way of explaining certain myths.

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a certain sense. This also puts Able's act at the end of the Wizard in a different - and I think better - perspective. It is not that he is lifting up or redeeming the woman: in my mind there have already been too many stories of "the good man who steps in and redeems the helplessly base woman". What he is elevating is his own love from something base and selfish to something... well, at least *slightly* higher.

Incorporated as well is a theme of the need for self-restraint that runs all the way through the story, in different ways, from beginning to end. Able has the power to impose his will on the events of the story - it is not a question of whether he CAN (whether he is Able), it is a question of whether he MAY. And the difference between the questions of "can" and "may" is constantly being brought up by Able throughout both books.

But this does bring up some other questions. First of all why does the Valfather demand that Able not use his power, and yet when Able does break his promise at the end he does so with the Valfather's blessing? Perhaps this is some indication that we cannot tame our baser instincts by force, that the issues must be wrestled with at their own level first. I don't know whether this counts as an adequate answer or not.

Another question is where the giants (of all levels) fit into this schema. It seems an important fact that they can love, but cannot be loved (and thus are fundamentally at odds with each other), but I am at a loss as to what to make of it. Similarly I find it difficult to place Kullili, even though we know quite a bit about her relationship with the Aelf. And, for that matter, what is Able's nature? He seems to inhabit Skai, Aelfrice, and Mythgarthr equally well. Perhaps this is some reflection of the different roles that the knightly ideal has played, from some perspectives being something to aspire to and yet also (at least for many on this list) something to look down upon. It is interesting that after Able restores Berthold and retires to Aelfrice, he sees him again from below; it is Berthold (a more modern heroic ideal) and not any knight who slays Schildstarr.

This post is quite scattered, and much of what's in it will be either painfully obvious or staunchly denied, but I wanted to throw some of this out there and see if anyone else could help elaborate on it.

Regards,
Chris

Chris — 02 Nov 2005, 22:31 · in reply to transient

When Grengarm opened his mouth, Able saw the faces of his victims - I don't think that there was any specific person's face in Grengarm's mouth that comprises the revelation Able is talking about.

I think that what Able is talking about there is that he had seen Garsecg's face in Setr's mouth earlier, and at that moment realized the implications - that if there had been a "real" Garsecg at one time, that sea aelf had been consumed and displaced by Setr.

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Thanks!

James Wynn — 03 Nov 2005, 03:31 · in reply to Chris

Chris said:

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Perhaps, maybe, this was me.

here: <http://lists.urth.net/htdig.cgi/urth-urth.net/2005-January/000298.html> I said:

The ambulance? That's Arthur Ormsby being taken to the hospital of course! They found him in a coma possibly near death from hypothermia in that valley where the Moss Aelf took him. Presumably, when he reaches the Most High God, he will awake.

I'm not convinced one can map the entire story upon a theory of the human psyche. Maybe it can be done. I don't know.

But I think that two things are surely true about this story.

1) The first is that lower worlds represent lower human desires (gods). Aelfrice is Romantic love. I'm not sure what else. Muspel is lust..for sex and power. Nifelheim...I don't know. Physical hunger? The Most Low God is anybody's guess. What is the most basic human desire after all other desires are stripped away? To continue to live regardless of the consequences? Mythgarthr is a tough one, I think. The desire to create? For Wolfe of course this means storytelling, so that would explain why Mythgarthr means "the place where story's are told." Skai is the desire for honor. Who knows what Michael's realm represents, but he tells Able that as a knight, he must command his lower gods just as *he* causes, by simple will, Valfather to bow before him. When Able learns to do that, Disiri transcends her world to become something more. He can enjoy his relationship with her, in Aelfrice, without being debilitated by her or being dominated. He can even take her with him to Skai.

Unless, I don't know this list at all. Not a few people will be revolted by this interpretation.

2) The second thing I'm sure of is that Able and his family...his brother and his mother...perhaps Ben's girlfriend too have aspects (natures) in all of the worlds; multiple aspects probably. (Heck! Perhaps they all are *wink*) Valfather and Michael are higher aspects of Able (there is a mythological and archeological connection between Odin and St. Michael). Arnthor is a lower aspect. I wanted Garceg (Arnthor's dragon brother) and Setr to be lower aspects of Able but there is no denying the naming convention. Anyway, if Garceg is a lower aspect of Able, why doesn't Able kill him or rule him? (But what of the Thor/Arnthor connection?) Arnthor is what Able would become if

he did not succeed in dominating his lower gods. Able eventually rules Arnthor's house and thus doing what Arnthor failed to do, because Arnthor is the slave of his lusts. Setr and his siblings were each "consumed" by their lower natures (lust for power and glory) which in turn were consuming Arnthor and Morcaine.

I can't defend this interpretation by showing that every event and person conforms to it in every way. And don't that is possible because I don't think Wolfe writes that way. But I think these things are true as far as they go.

J

Bob Miller — 06 Nov 2005, 02:50 · in reply to transient

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URL: /pipermail/urth-urth.net/attachments/20051105/dfaec8bd/attachment.htm

James Wynn — 06 Nov 2005, 06:14 · follows Bob Miller

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URL: /pipermail/urth-urth.net/attachments/20051106/2a2804d3/attachment.htm

James Wynn — 06 Nov 2005, 06:18 · follows James Wynn

Bob,

You ought to send your posts in Plain Text format.

The body of your posts is currently being scrubbed on the online version.

aramini1 at cox.net — 08 Nov 2005, 04:08 · follows James Wynn

I rather liked Chris grafting of a psychological frame for WK - Dante framed the universe as a thing inside God's mind, and this was used by Wolfe in Peace. It also makes, I think, a bit of interesting play on Andrew Bollen's earlier analysis (forgive me if I am incorrect, it was some time ago) of "the dream [Able's] mother had" as an explanation for how Mag could both be and not be his mother at the same time. For the realm of dream is a rather special place in our subconscious that actually "takes over" our awareness when we pass into slumber (at least, that's how it seems to us).

I'm still not certain that the boy who fights off highjackers is necessarily Able, just as the girl who goes into childbirth is certainly NOT Able. They are just more dwellers in the string of Parka. Able could just as easily be the boy who loses his dog and chokes on a rabbit (although that particular vision accompanies the scene of Toug losing his voice until Arthur/Able retrieves the sword).

Good job, Chris.

From: "Chris" <rasputin_ at hotmail.com>

Date: 2005/11/02 Wed PM 05:26:52 EST

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Subject: (urth) WK psychological cosmology

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Chris — 11 Nov 2005, 23:09 · in reply to aramini1 at cox.net

I may be imagining things, but I got the impression that the bow string was not full of entire lives, but only certain pieces of the lives of various people. Heroic moments, to be particular. So I don't see any reason to think that Art Ormsby is any one of them, though you might say they're all Able.

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Well, he get's the string and bow from Parka. Since Parka's name identifies her indirectly with the Greek Fates and since that association (and the fact that she also gives Able a stave) identifies her with the Norns, I'd say the string **does** contain all those lives in their entirety.

The existance of that string, btw, -- containing the story of all those different lives -- is the biggest argument IMO against the events of The Wizard Knight being somehow internal to Arthur Ormsby (as I believe they are).

J