

Love & Courage

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 06 Dec 2005

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thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 06 Dec 2005, 03:26

It seems to me that themes running through Wolfe's later works have much to do with these two qualities. It would probably be more exact to say "the positive attributes of Aphrodite/Venus" and "the ditto of Ares/Mars", except that Wolfe does not see them as essentially female and male, although their anthropomorphized aspects may take gendered forms.

Wolfe, I believe, sees a kind of alchemical marriage between the two as the route to transcendence or whatever you want to call it. The transcendent Neighbors advertise their "married" state by their twinned forms, with the obvious nod to the Symposium. (Recall the frustratingly interesting question posed to Jahlee by the inhumu who has pursued Silkhorn to her mountain top: "Is this your male half, oh Misted One?" - or words to that effect.)

Some of his human protagonists suffer from a lack of balance between the two, which gets resolved one way or another as the character develops. Silk's Love-aspect, for example, overshadows his (nevertheless substantial) Courage-aspect, most obviously in his obsession with Hyacinth. Horn goes the other way, his Courage far outstripping his Love. Fused and balanced in SilkHorn, they achieve a joint transcendence.

As a Wolfean hero, it's interesting that Able is not a compound (in fact, he's more of a split; Able and Art). His development is from adolescence to adulthood, rather than as a fusion of complements. Obviously, he's Courage-dominated in the way of adolescent males - his love for Dsiri starts as adolescent eroticism and infatuation, very strong but very crude. By the end of the story, of course, his Love-aspect has developed into the Real Thing, and he's ready to ascend through the higher spheres.

(Dsiri, of course, develops also: to start with, fickle; by the end, surely not. And surely timorous to start with, and in the end a valiant warrior.)