

Possible Source for the "White Fountain"

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 12 Mar 2006

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David F. Driscoll — 12 Mar 2006, 03:36

Hi! This is my first post to the list, but I've read a lot of the archives in the past. I did a search and didn't find anything about this, so hopefully I'm not going old ground here.

In one of Chesterton's Father Brown stories, the action revolves around a tall, handsome sun-god worshipper (the priest Kalon) who sets up shop in an American-style office building in London. He's presented very negatively and often contrasted with the short, round-faced Christian priest Father Brown. At one point, he stands on a balcony and prays:

"O sun," cried the prophet, "O star that art too great to be allowed among the stars! O fountain that flowest quietly in that secret space that is called space. White Father of all white unwearied things, white flames and white flowers and white peaks. Father, who art more innocent than all thy most innocent and quiet children; primal purity, into the peace of which--" (G.K. Chesterton, "The Eye of Apollo," in *The Father Brown Omnibus* p. 181).

Wolfe has surely read this passage - his fondness for Chesterton is well known, and the Father Brown stories are some of Chesterton's most famous works. Of course, the phrase "White Fountain" is never explicitly said here, but we get a "White Father" with a comparison to a fountain in the previous sentence. It's at least a possibility - I'm not entirely sure it's correct.

David Driscoll

Andy Robertson — 12 Mar 2006, 09:03 · in reply to David F. Driscoll

David F. Driscoll writes:

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Interesting catch. I do wonder if Wolfe would not have flagged such a referent a bit more explicitly - but it might be the case.