

American Nights Forgery -- more evidence

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 13 May 2008

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Dave Tallman — 13 May 2008, 15:59

Here is some more evidence I found. Here some are other errors (other than Nadan drinking alcohol) in what I believe is the forged part, the account of the final day and night:

- Nadan was nearly convinced that all he had left of the eggs was candy (p. 370 IODDAOSAOS Orb edition). The next day, he is afraid one of the remaining eggs will cause despairing madness (p. 377).
- He says "We walked north along the bank of the channel until we reached the ruins of the old tomb..." (the Jefferson Memorial). To reach this place from the hotel, they couldn't just walk north. They would have to turn west and cross a bridge, exactly the same bridge where robbers lurked a few days before (p. 353).
- The parade is not something that would be done on Easter, but on Good Friday. Would the theater really be closed for Good Friday? The American society as a whole doesn't seem that religious for the theater to forego the income.
- "The dead leader lifted up" phrase seems wrong. Mulims honor Jesus as a prophet but don't believe he really died on the cross.

Here is an extended list of Holy Week parallels:

1. In the first paragraph, Nadan compares himself to a man condemned to death.
2. The ruined city suggests Jerusalem. One part is described as "occupied." (As in 'Jesus Christ Superstar' -- "We are occupied. Have you forgotten how put down we are?") The police act like the Roman soldiers.
3. He is staying at the "Inn of the Holidays" (holy days).
4. The first real entry into the city is on Palm Sunday. Nadan describes crowds and music.
5. The authorities are plotting against him.
6. Nadan is followed by beggars and people needing healing.
7. A sacred place (the Washington Monument) has been converted into a den of thieves, selling stolen rings.
8. Ardis becomes Judas, the disciple who betrays him. Her gift is a bracelet containing pieces of silver. She shuts his mouth "with a kiss."
9. The meal of sandwiches (bread) and fruit-flavored beverage (wine) recalls the Last Supper (although I believe this is in the forged part).
10. Twice Nadan is served bitter drinks (pp. 345 and 363).
11. Red and purple garments in the city. Scarlet and purple robes were put on Jesus.
12. The curator's conversation with Nadan is an elaborate form of the question "What is truth?". I suggest the curator is meant to be the Procurator, Pontius Pilate. If so, it suggests he has a role in condemning

Nadan to death.

Like the woman with two halves to her face "one large-eyed and idiotically despairing, the other squinting and sneering" (p. 339), there are two horror stories here. One is a monster tale, but the hidden one is of human monsters. It shows us that Americans could behave as horribly as the third-world people they look down on, were the roles reversed.

Roy C. Lackey — 15 May 2008, 05:40 · follows Dave Tallman

Dave,

If, as you contend, the last three pages of the notebook were forged, and if, as you also contend, they were forged by an automated writing machine, then the climax of the story is a Farsi farce. The most pivotal incident of Nadan's life is nothing but a machine-generated fiction, which trivializes what, for Nadan, was a soul-shattering event. And it makes for a much less interesting story.

I don't see Wolfe attempting to map a week in the life of a Moslem to the events of Holy Week. As you said early on, this story is a perverted rehash of the story of Cupid and Psyche, but with a reversal of gender. Instead of Psyche's light revealing the naked glory of a god, Nadan's light revealed something that was not merely ugly to behold, it was something that crossed a moral or spiritual boundary from which there was no return. He had embraced that something, loved, or at least lusted after it, and saw himself as irrevocably polluted by his contact.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 15 May 2008, 12:05 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey writes:

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In my version, Nadan will have the same soul-shattering revelation, but it will be an epiphany of psychological horror. He will learn before he dies that the woman he loved was a moral monster, lying to him from the beginning, part of a plot to cause destruction on a massive scale.

I find this more interesting than the original, a mere werewolf story. There are layers of abstraction; the story is told by a foolish man with his own agenda, embellished here and there to make him look good, redacted out of fear of the police, and capped with a false ending. In spite of all that, we can still catch a glimpse of the truth at the core. It is not a closed curve.

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I expect Wolfe believes that every person must ultimately face the transcendent truth of Christianity. There is an inversion of Cupid and Psyche, but I think the inverted passion story is the big picture. Here's another parallel. In the final paragraph Nadan wrote, he says "I will" three times. He will "grapple the trend" and force things in the direction he wishes. In other words, "not Thy will, but mine be done," an inversion of the Gethsemane prayer. It won't work -- things will be taken out of his hands and the ultimate result will be a Black Easter when an American bomb comes forth from its tomb to bring death and destruction.