

Patera Incus

The Urth list — 36 messages, 8 voices, 13 Aug 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5708>

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Lee Berman — 13 Aug 2010, 16:09

James Wynn- I think it is pretty plain that Patera Incus is female. But I've only had one person remark on that assertion approving.

I think that is interesting. I am not as intimately familiar with Long Sun as BotNS but my intuitive impression has been that Patera Incus is a (probably non-practicing) homosexual. I'd be interested in hearing your ideas.

Gerry Quinn — 14 Aug 2010, 11:26 · in reply to Lee Berman

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>

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BotNS but my intuitive impression has been that Patera Incus is a (probably non-practicing) homosexual. I'd be interested in hearing your ideas.

If Incus is not a rather campy homosexual... how then would one write a campy homosexual?

There's one passage where he writes in a letter something like "me with a WOMAN [ridiculous]". That is not the writing of a woman masquerading as a man.

- Gerry Quinn

Jeff Wilson — 14 Aug 2010, 12:59 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 8/14/2010 6:26 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

From: "Lee Berman" <severiansola at hotmail.com>

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I think that is interesting. I am not as intimately familiar with Long Sun as

BotNS but my intuitive impression has been that Patera Incus is a (probably non-practicing) homosexual. I'd be interested in hearing your ideas.

If Incus is not a rather campy homosexual... how then would one write a campy homosexual?

There's one passage where he writes in a letter something like "me with

a WOMAN [ridiculous]". That is not the writing of a woman masquerading as a man.

Unless the woman were to cleverly pose as a homosexual man; see VICTOR/VICTORIA.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
IEEE Student Chapter Blog at
< <http://ieeetamut.org> >

James Wynn — 14 Aug 2010, 19:34 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

1. Why Patera Inucus is a woman...

1.1 The Letters to Fulmar

In Lake of the Long Sun, Incus is attempting to say something to "My Dear Friend Fulmar". The Patera is trying to express something to him but doesn't quite know how. Unfortunately, Incus recognizes that Fulmar is not especially perceptive as reflected by his name, meaning a type of gull which in Vironese thieves cant is a simpleton.

1.1.1 First attempt.

Incus writes a note to explain why he can't come to the Black Mechanics meeting. The letter has two parts italicized (probably underlined in Incus's actual letter):

a woman and _myself_"

Incus thinks, "*_Myself_* standing for *_I_*", as even that fool Fulmar could not help but understand" However, Incus decides that this is too obvious. Remora might find the letter. It was too risky.

1.1.2 Second Attempt. This time Incus disguises his handwriting.

"You know, my friend, yet it might be more thoughtfully be said that you cannot know, how much I have been looking forward to a *_plain firsthand account_* of the marvelous adventures of our mutual acquaintance Bee. Bee himself.

Incus thinks, "No, it would not do. Fulmar would be utterly thrown off the scent by *_the male pronoun_*." [emphasis mine]

Question how does the male pronoun throw Fulmar "off the scent"? Off the scent of what?

Answer: Off the scent of the name *_Bee_*. The order for bees is "*_hymen_optera*". And of course, a hymen is a female anatomy. It also might be an identity that Incus is otherwise known to Fulmar. Because, she tells Gulo regarding the name "Hy": "Her full name would be "Hymenocallis", I expect....Very pretty, I've used it a time or two myself."

What Incus was trying to get Fulmar to clue to was that "Bee (hymen=woman), himself" meant "woman myself". Too subtle? Yes. Incus ultimately agreed.

1.1.3 Finally, Incus decides to go to Fulmar's house in person and deliver "a clear, straightforward message" (compare to the message in

1.1.2). Additionally the text says:

"Nor would the trouble and loss of time go entirely unrecompensed; *_he, Incus_*, [compare to the letter in 1.1.1, emphasis mine] would at least have the satisfaction of..."

It is not clear that Incus ever got around to delivering that letter. Probably not. By the time "he" returned to Prolocutor's Palace, Incus *_was_* the Prolocutor appointed by Scylla (sort of).

1.2 Auk's Failed Attempt to Sacrifice Hyacinth

Auk kidnaps Hy to sacrifice her to Tartaros. But during the sacrifice the god tells him to let her go. It's a weird scene and deriving an unambivalent understanding from the text alone of what is going on is simply not possible. Fortunately, Wolfe has explained it on this very list during the famous Q&A:

Q. Why did Auk ... kidnap Hyacinth, and why, subsequently, did he let her go?

A. Because Tartaros had told him to bring a woman. He released her as he recovered from his brain injury, was able to think more clearly, and realized that _Hyacinth was not the woman he should bring_. (Putting it another way, he released her because Tartaros told him to. These answers are not as disparate as they may appear.)

Okay. Hyacinth was likely an unsuitable sacrifice because she wasn't a virgin. Additionally, we learn at Mint and Sand's sacrifice that

presenting the woman is all that is needed. I think Hy was unsuitable for other reasons too, but that's another can of worms. The question before us is what woman SHOULD he have brought? More to the point, what woman DID he bring?

Well, Incus was there in front of the Sacred Window. And even her name (or one of them) means "virgin".

1.3 Thematic Evidences

Although the previous evidences seem sufficient to me now, they are not the reasons I first realized that Incus was a woman. They only presented themselves afterwards. The realization came to me first when I discovered that Wolfe was working mythology into the characters of Silk and Auk. And in every instance in which Incus took part in that "working in", the patera played the part of a female.

1.3.1 Aristaeas

When reading *Nightside*, I saw that there were ways Silk seemed to be connected to Apollo. So I got out Robert Graves' "The Greek Myths" and checked the index to review every myth in which the god took part. Also, noted that Graves said rosemary, mint, and myrtle were used in funerary rites. Ah so! Silk's sybs are named after the plants of used in funerary rites. Where else does myrtle come from? Well, the poet/prophet/priest Aristaeus, who was written about by Pindar, the Theban poet who appears in "Soldier of the Mist", who was a SON of Apollo, was raised by the Myrtle Nymphs. So I started paying attention to Graves's description of Aristaeus' bio while reading the rest of the *Book of the Long Sun*. And

to my pleasure the novel and Graves' rendition mapped perfectly from beginning to end.

Incidentally, story of Horn story in *The Book of the Short Sun* maps nicely for him as the son of Aristaeus, Actaeon. But that's another can of worms.

What surprised me however was the sacrifice of the bullocks and heifers. Wolfe does this twice and in both circumstance Incus was counted among the heifers.

1.3.2 Hesperaestus

Silk and Auk divide the works of Hesperaestus between them. They actually divide other myths between them as well. But for Hesperaestus, Silk performs all his deeds on Mt Olympus

(including being thrown off the mountain by Hera and lamed). Auk performs those deeds off of Olympus when he was banished from the mountain and worked below the sea with Thetis and Eurynome.

Now Hesphaestus's workshop was an interesting place. It had "mechanical women" who aided him.

In Exodus of the Long Sun, when Auk, under Tartaros's divine influence, begins repairing Sand, performing the deeds of Hesphaestus as smith, he is assisted directly by Incus who hands him his tools and holds the light. Incus is of course a "black mechanic" and "a woman"--a mechanical woman.

2. Does Incus Appear as a Woman anywhere in the story?

Yes and no. Not on stage, per se.

But Incus has those large, yellow teeth. And the "incus" is a bone in the ear. So, I presume that Incus is the enigmatic Maytera Corn (ear of corn) who instructs the chem Olivine while she is living Prolocutor Incus's house (Return to the Whorl).

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James Wynn — 14 Aug 2010, 19:50 · in reply to James Wynn

One other association that I meant to point out:

- a) hymen (derived from the Greek for "membrane")
- b) tympanic membrane in the ear drum
- c) incus (a bone in the ear drum)

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James Wynn — 15 Aug 2010, 06:37 · in reply to James Wynn

Lee- a brief comment on your Patera Incus post. Thanks for posting it. It does seem like a similar process to the one in which I identify Father Inire in various guises. There are just a constellation of tiny clues. None by itself means much, but together they become hard to ignore. You know SOMETHING is going on. And I like the conclusion that Patera Incus is a woman. It seems very Wolfean to me. My intuitive impression, that he was a secretly a gay priest, is not such a shocking revelation, even in the real world. And not one worthy of subtle clues in a Wolfe book.

Well, it wouldn't be much of a secret and it is hard to imagine that either the Charter or Vironese society would care much. Spider certainly doesn't bother to hide his preferences. Incus is pretty open in accusing Gulo of having homosexual inclinations.

But for a woman to be an augur. Well, that would be unacceptable. That would bring more than a handful of problems if it were revealed...especially with Incus's extra small hands.

u+16b9

Gerry Quinn — 15 Aug 2010, 10:18 · in reply to James Wynn

----- Original Message -----

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

1. Why Patera Inucus is a woman...

1.1.2 Second Attempt. This time Incus disguises his handwriting.

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Incus thinks, "No, it would not do. Fulmar would be utterly thrown off the scent by _the male pronoun_." [emphasis mine]

Question how does the male pronoun throw Fulmar "off the scent"? Off the scent of what?

Of who "Bee" is, surely? Wasn't it short for a female's name, somebody other than Incus, who had reprogrammed the valet chem?

Still, you make some interesting points. Maybe he is after all a woman in disguise.

- Gerry Quinn

James Wynn — 15 Aug 2010, 14:29 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

James Wynn-

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Gerry Quinn-

Of who "Bee" is, surely? Wasn't it short for a female's name, somebody other than Incus, who had reprogrammed the valet chem?

That doesn't really work.

1) The valet was a male chem.

"Nor would the trouble and loss of time go entirely unrecompensed; he, Incus, would at least have the satisfaction of inquiring just how long it had been since the unfortunate valet had received _his_ wages, and observing the chem's baffled incomprehension." Lake of the Long Sun, Chapter X, On the Belly of the Whorl

2) Remember that this is the *second* attempt at a letter. I don't think there's any way the first could be interpreted as relating to the valet or the experiment.

u+16b9

Gerry Quinn — 15 Aug 2010, 15:08 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

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Gerry Quinn-

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That doesn't really work.

1) The valet was a male chem.

I mixed up Bittersweet's porter and Fulmar's valet, but that doesn't really matter.

"Bittersweet had promised to show everyone the wonders she had achieved with an old porter... Incus had wanted to see that" (He wanted to check out the valet too.)

In his letter he writes "I have been looking forward to a firsthand account from our mutual acquaintance Bee. Bee himself."

My understanding was that he was trying to be discreet in case the letter was intercepted.

"Nor would the trouble and loss of time go entirely unrecompensed; he, Incus, would at least have the satisfaction of inquiring just how long it had been since the unfortunate valet had received _his_ wages, and observing the chem's baffled incomprehension."

Lake of the Long Sun, Chapter X, On the Belly of the Whorl

2) Remember that this is the *second* attempt at a letter. I don't think there's any way the first could be interpreted as relating to the valet or the experiment.

But how does the first version help your case?

(By the way, this is just a quibble about one of your reasons why Incus might be a woman; it doesn't apply to the rest.)

- Gerry Quinn

James Wynn — 15 Aug 2010, 15:40 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

James Wynn-

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Gerry Quinn-

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The valet had been altered by Incus. Thus, "satisfaction" at asking how long since he had received his wages. Therefore, having already seen the chem and knowing full well what the results were, seeing him again was just a side issue, as Incus said. And the chem that Bittersweet would use was a male too. "He had wanted very much to see the old porter with _his_ skullplate and faceplate removed."

In his letter he writes "I have been looking forward to a firsthand account from our mutual acquaintance Bee. Bee himself." My understanding was that he was trying to be discreet in case the letter

was intercepted.

Well, Incus was trying to be discreet, but not about that. The message that the patera is attempting to convey must have been attempted in both letters. That the letter might be intercepted was a concern, but the frustration of getting dense Fulmar to understand something he didn't know was the primary concern.

James Wynn-

2) Remember that this is the *second* attempt at a letter. I don't think there's any way the first could be interpreted as relating to the valet or the experiment.

But how does the first version help your case? (By the way, this is just a quibble about one of your reasons why Incus might be a woman; it doesn't apply to the rest.)

The first letter emphasizes "a woman" and "myself". This is an intentional clue as Incus thinks to herself after writing it: "_Myself_ standing for _I_", as even that fool Fulmar could not help but understand."

So the message is "I, a woman".

Wolfe emphasizes this for the reader later when Incus thinks, "_he Incus_", would at least have the satisfaction of..."

u+16b9

Gerry Quinn — 15 Aug 2010, 15:54 · in reply to James Wynn

From: James Wynn

The valet had been altered by Incus. Thus, "satisfaction" at asking how long since he had received his wages.

No, he was alerted by Fulmar with the help of Incus. "The valet had been a most creditable little project, and one Fulmar could never have brought to its wholly successful conclusion without his help."

Therefore, having already seen the chem and knowing full well what the results were, seeing him again was just a side issue, as Incus said. And the chem that Bittersweet would use was a male too.

"He had wanted very much to see the old porter with _his_ skullplate and faceplate removed."

I don't see what the gender of either chem has to do with anything.

Well, Incus was trying to be discreet, but not about that. The message that the patera is attempting to convey must have been attempted in both letters. That the letter might be intercepted was a concern, but the frustration of getting dense Fulmar to understand something he didn't know was the primary concern.

The message was: "I can't make it tonight." The rest is chit-chat.

And why would Incus be planting clues of this kind anyway? He really wanted to see Bittersweet's porter, that is made clear in the text. Why does he want to make puzzles for Fulmar?

- Gerry Quinn

Mo Holkar — 15 Aug 2010, 17:31 · in reply to James Wynn

At 20:34 14/08/2010, James wrote:

1.1 The Letters to Fulmar

In Lake of the Long Sun, Incus is attempting to say something to "My Dear Friend Fulmar". The Patera is trying to express something to him but doesn't quite know how. Unfortunately, Incus recognizes that Fulmar is not especially perceptive as reflected by his name, meaning a type of gull which in Vironese thieves cant is a simpleton.

Just on a zoological note: a fulmar is not a type of gull, but a type of petrel. Apart from both being birds, fulmars and gulls are not related at all.

best,

Mo

~ # ~

WolfeWiki -- a wiki about Gene Wolfe

<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

James Wynn — 15 Aug 2010, 18:10 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

James Wynn-

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Gerry Quinn-

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Tomayto Tomahto.

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Me neither. When Incus writes "our friend Bee. Bee himself." and then decides "Fulmar would be utterly thrown off the scent by _the male pronoun_", he is not referring to the sex of any chem. But there is no reference to Bittersweet in the first email.

The message was: "I can't make it tonight." The rest is chit-chat.

Why not just say, "I can't make it tonight due to Chapter duties"? Why reference Bittersweet at all? Once again, there is no mention of Bittersweet in the first email. Yet it was considered riskier than the second where you suppose Incus is employing a code name for Bittersweet.

And why would Incus be planting clues of this kind anyway? He really wanted to see Bittersweet's porter, that is made clear in the text.

Why does he want to make puzzles for Fulmar?

Incus is attempting to reveal herself to Fulmar, "my dear friend". It seems, she is in love and knows the relationship will not progress as long as Fulmar continues to consider it fraternal. (It's not "Victor Victoria", it's "Yentl".)

She wants to impart the information in a way that Fulmar will come to the conclusion himself. She is afraid of shocking him.

It's interesting to me that you presume the letters have to do with a desire to see Bittersweet's demonstration. In my experience, most readers think Incus is attempting to reveal a homosexual love for Fulmar. I hope I at least shown that that is not likely.

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James Wynn — 15 Aug 2010, 18:12 · in reply to Mo Holkar

Just on a zoological note: a fulmar is not a type of gull, but a type of petrel. Apart from both being birds, fulmars and gulls are not related at all.

Hmm..Interesting, since fulmar means "foul gull".

Thanks.

u+16b9

James Wynn — 15 Aug 2010, 18:15 · in reply to James Wynn

On 8/15/2010 1:10 PM, James Wynn wrote:

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heh "letter" not "email".

Roy C. Lackey — 15 Aug 2010, 21:32 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

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1.1.1 First attempt.

Incus writes a note to explain why he can't come to the Black Mechanics meeting. The letter has two parts italicized (probably underlined in Incus's actual letter):

a woman and _myself_"

Incus thinks, "_Myself_ standing for _I_", as even that fool Fulmar could not help but understand"

However, Incus decides that this is too obvious. Remora might find the letter. It was too risky.

The two underlined parts of the note are not related. The first refers to the object of the mission Remora sent him on. Incus is mildly scandalized that his boss is sending him, an augur, in search of a woman of ill repute. Augurs are not supposed to associate with strange women outside of their priestly duties. On top of that, Incus is evidently homosexual, which makes his mission even more ironic. He obviously dares not sign the note, so the _Myself_ is his way of communicating who wrote it. The other contents of the note impart enough information for Fulmar to understand who the Myself is -- given the planned meeting that night of the black mechanics, at which Bittersweet was to demonstrate her latest technique.

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The _plain firsthand account_ refers to Incus's fervent desire to witness for himself Bittersweet's new technique, as indicated by his thoughts right before he first picked up the quill.

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I agree with that sentence, anyway. Incus doesn't want to betray the identity of a fellow black mechanic, so he writes "Bee" because that is the sound of the first letter in Bittersweet as well as the initial. The masculine pronoun was a further attempt to disguise her identity should the note be intercepted. The altered handwriting was also an attempt to hide Incus's identity, since Remora was familiar with his handwriting.

The first version of the note said what Incus wanted to say, as indicated by his satisfaction with it, but was too risky. He abandoned both notes in favor of delivering an oral message to Fulmar's chem valet.

I don't suppose it matters that masculine pronouns are used to describe Incus in the list of characters at the front of the book.

-Roy

Lee Berman — 15 Aug 2010, 23:10 · follows Roy C. Lackey

James: Unfortunately, Incus recognizes that Fulmar is not especially perceptive as reflected by his name, meaning a type of gull which in Vironese thieves cant is a simpleton

Mo Holkar: Just on a zoological note: a fulmar is not a type of gull, but a type of petrel. Apart from both being birds, fulmars and gulls are not related at all.

Well, they are both seabirds comprising a smaller much smaller subset than that which would include owls and ostriches. But it is still a good correction to make (given my own background, I can never complain about more accurate zoology). Gulls are generally more intensely social and as such, as tends to be the case among social predators, more cunning and intelligent than petrels.

James Wynn — 16 Aug 2010, 00:53 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

James Wynn-

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??? This is a strange argument.

It would be mildly scandalous to be alone with a woman in an augur's residence at night. It would not be at all wrong for augurs to be in the casual presence of women with more than two people present. Remora and Quetzal are in the casual presence of women all the time. Incus is not at all misogynistic as the phrase in the first letter implied. The time spent with Chenille and the desire to see Bittersweet's demonstration is evidence enough of that. That part of the letter was disingenuous. It was a PLOY to work the term "a woman" into the letter with emphasis.

On top of that, Incus is evidently homosexual, which makes his mission even more ironic. He obviously dares not sign the note, so the _Myself_ is his way of communicating who wrote it. The other contents of the note impart enough information for Fulmar to understand who the Myself is --

Then why include "myself"?

given the planned meeting that night of the black mechanics, at which Bittersweet was to demonstrate her latest technique.

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The _plain firsthand account_ refers to Incus's fervent desire to witness for himself Bittersweet's new technique, as indicated by his thoughts right before he first picked up the quill.

The only parallel between the two letters is "myself" (which positively refers to Incus) and "himself" (which is a positive misdirection). Considering what Incus said in the first letter, "himself" refers to the same person.

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But now there is no way for Fulmar to know who is writing the letter now. That was what was so important before, no?

The first version of the note said what Incus wanted to say, as indicated by his satisfaction with it, but was too risky. He abandoned both notes in favor of delivering an oral message to Fulmar's chem valet.

All this fails to address why an elaborate message was required in the first place. Incus could have just sent a note saying "I regret that I cannot make it tonight due to duties at work".

I don't suppose it matters that masculine pronouns are used to describe Incus in the list of characters at the front of the book.

No. That would be an utterly trivial argument. Maytera Marble is described as "she" in the list of characters in front of the book-- the pronoun is strictly formal. She is not physically a woman.

u+16b9

Roy C. Lackey — 16 Aug 2010, 06:02 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn quoted and wrote:

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Then why include "myself"?

It's "your poor coworker Myself,". The coworker part distinguishes Incus from Bittersweet or any other invited guests, if any. It had been Incus who had worked with Fulmar to alter Fulmar's chem valet.

"You know, my friend, yet it might be more thoughtfully be said that you cannot know, how much I have been looking forward to a _plain firsthand account_ of the marvelous adventures of our mutual acquaintance Bee.

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himself.

The _plain firsthand account_ refers to Incus's fervent desire to witness for himself Bittersweet's new technique, as indicated by his thoughts right before he first picked up the quill.

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"Himself" isn't used in the first note. There is no punctuation mark after "Bee himself" in the second note. Incus just stopped writing at that point, sure that Fulmar would be thrown by the male pronoun. If Incus believed Fulmar not sharp enough to understand that "Bee" stood for Bittersweet, how could he possibly expect Fulmar to unravel an oblique cipher, the purpose of which was to communicate to Fulmar that his friend Patera Incus was in fact a she? A cryptic note written in haste is hardly the time or means of imparting such a bizarre and personal revelation.

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note be intercepted. The altered handwriting was also an attempt to hide Incus's identity, since Remora was familiar with his handwriting.

But now there is no way for Fulmar to know who is writing the letter now. That was what was so important before, no?

Bittersweet was not mentioned in the first note, so the "coworker" served to clue Fulmar in on which of the invited black mechanics wrote it. Bittersweet is referenced in the second note as Bee, so the writer of the note had to be another invited guest, but the note was left unfinished. Had it been finished, Incus may have worked in a way to identify the sender, as he did in the first version.

The first version of the note said what Incus wanted to say, as indicated by his satisfaction with it, but was too risky. He abandoned both notes in favor of delivering an oral message to Fulmar's chem valet.

All this fails to address why an elaborate message was required in the first place. Incus could have just sent a note saying "I regret that I cannot make it tonight due to duties at work".

Incus makes it clear that he wanted to see with his own eyes exactly how Bittersweet had tinkered with an old porter chem. Hearing about it wasn't good enough, and he was bitterly disappointed.

A better point to address would be why Incus would use an elaborate message to make such a personal revelation in the first place. In any event, Incus did plan to personally deliver "a clear straightforward message" to Fulmar's valet, and I very seriously doubt that the message to be delivered to a valet had anything to do with a surprise revelation about gender issues.

I don't suppose it matters that masculine pronouns are used to describe Incus in the list of characters at the front of the book.

No. That would be an utterly trivial argument. Maytera Marble is described as "she" in the list of characters in front of the book-- the pronoun is strictly formal. She is not physically a woman.

Trivial? Then, by that logic, the chapter titles in SHADOW don't mean anything either, in which case the face on the greasy coins can be Tzadkiel's or anyone else imagined. No, Marble is not a human woman, but in Wolfe's Sun Cycle chems are designated male and female and the pronouns just come with the usage. That is a spurious argument.

-Roy

James Wynn — 16 Aug 2010, 09:44 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy,

I don't think you and I are going to come to an agreement about this. Your statement "The two underlined parts of the [first] note are not related" is an "Uncle Andrew" moment. I don't see how to get over it.

For me the repeated derivable occurrences of the word "hymen" and its connection to Incus's name are just too compelling. They are not coincidental.

[snip]Bittersweet had tinkered with an old porter chem. Hearing about it wasn't good enough, and he was bitterly disappointed.

Let's address this from Wolfe's point of view. Why two elaborate attempts at a letter that (by your reading) reveal nothing to us that was not carefully explained in the previous page of text?

A better point to address would be why Incus would use an elaborate message to make such a personal revelation in the first place.

Because it gives Wolfe a chance to reveal something about Incus. Something which is not accomplished at all by your reading--because by your reading nothing at all is accomplished. I can see that this is "a better point to address" from your perspective since the original question is not resolvable for you.

In any event, Incus did plan to personally deliver "a clear straightforward message" to Fulmar's valet, and I very seriously doubt that the message to be delivered to a valet had anything to do with a surprise revelation about gender issues.

I imagine the letter to the valet would have looked much like the first note.

valet had anything to do with a surprise revelation about gender issues.
[snip]Trivial? Then, by that logic, the chapter titles in SHADOW don't mean anything either, in which case the face on the greasy coins can be Tzadkiel's or anyone else imagined. No, Marble is not a human woman, but in Wolfe's Sun Cycle chems are designated male and female and the pronouns just come with the usage. That is a spurious argument.

Hm...so you conflate my assertion about the character list to chapter titles and textual clues, but **my** argument is spurious? It would be rather stupid for Wolfe to develop a subtly alluded "Pope Joan" character and then paste "she" all over the character list. The character list is not intended as a spoiler.

Look, Roy, your counter-argument is founded on two very tenuous assertions to my mind: That Wolfe had Incus toil over two expansive, apparently risky letters when a brief, to-the-point note would have sufficed **from the author's perspective**. That the deliberate emphasis on the words "a woman" and "myself" in the first letter have no literary value (they don't connote any that would not be perfectly obvious if the emphases were not there). Wolfe's stories are not read like that, and they shouldn't be. When a pointless artifact is dramatically laid on the table, it's not pointless. When a character who is important to the incidental inner circle of characters is discussed but never appears on stage, it's not because the discussion was mere flourish.

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Mo Holkar — 16 Aug 2010, 09:53 · in reply to Lee Berman

At 00:10 16/08/2010, Lee wrote:

Mo Holkar: Just on a zoological note: a fulmar is not a type of gull, but a type of petrel. Apart from both being birds, fulmars and gulls are not related at all.

Well, they are both seabirds comprising a smaller much smaller subset than that which would include owls and ostriches.

Although they are in that sense more closely culturally associated with gulls than are owls and ostriches, really they are no more closely related to them than those other birds are. "Seabirds" is not a genetic relationship grouping, just a behavioural coincidence of habitat.

(Of course, Wolfe may have just been intending a cultural association of this sort in Fulmar's name, as it might have been difficult to find an actual gull-based name that didn't include the obvious word "gull".)

At 19:12 15/08/2010, James wrote:

Hmm..Interesting, since fulmar means "foul gull".

That is certainly its etymology, although linguists will give you a long debate on whether etymology and meaning are necessarily strongly linked ;-) It's reasonable that the ancient Norse thought fulmars were a type of gull, as they do look superficially fairly similar. I would be surprised if Wolfe made the same mistake... although see parentheses above.

best,

Mo

~ # ~

WolfeWiki -- a wiki about Gene Wolfe
<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

James Wynn — 16 Aug 2010, 11:47 · in reply to Mo Holkar

On 8/16/2010 4:53 AM, Mo Holkar wrote:
(Of course, Wolfe may have just been intending a cultural association of this sort in Fulmar's name, as it might have been difficult to find an actual gull-based name that didn't include the obvious word "gull".)

This seems quite plausible.

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Lee Berman — 16 Aug 2010, 12:32 · follows James Wynn

James Wynn: When a pointless artifact is dramatically laid on the table, it's not pointless. When a character who is important to the incidental inner circle of characters is discussed but never appears on stage, it's not because the discussion was mere flourish.

James, I think your first conclusion is that if Wolfe goes through the trouble of describing how a letter is written and re-written then SOMETHING weird is going on. I think even Roy might agree with this conclusion though it might strain every fiber in his being to admit it. I acknowledge and appreciate the effort he made a month or two ago to concede, after years of discussion, that perhaps there is some monkey business going on with Father Inire.

James, your second conclusion is a hypothesis to explain what weird thing is happening with these letters- Incus is a woman. Perhaps part of your (perceived on my part) frustration is that Roy is finding evidence to poke holes in your conclusion without offering an alternate conclusion on what is going on here (other than the default- nothing). Others might attack your conclusion by instead by proposing more plausible explanations of their own.

Perhaps these others could be compared to infantrymen, engaging in battle mano-a mano. If so, perhaps we can see Roy as akin to a sniper. He cannot risk his acknowledged (by me and others including Borski and Andre-Driussi) value as a defender of the lupine gospel by betraying his own position and subjecting himself to the withering fire of the enemy.

We each have our talents. If we recognize this and approach discussing Wolfe as though we are on the same team as opposed to working against each other, I think progress will be maximized. As I see it, Roy is not shooting down your theory, he is helping to improve it.

My opinion is that something weird IS going on when a fictional letter is written, then re-written.

And so far, James' explanation has the honor of Best Working Hypothesis on what that weird thing is. Perhaps there are other candidates?

James Wynn — 16 Aug 2010, 13:24 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee-

I think [James's] first conclusion is that if Wolfe goes through the trouble of describing how a letter is written and re-written then SOMETHING weird is going on. I think even Roy might agree with this conclusion though it might strain every fiber in his being to admit it. I acknowledge and appreciate the effort he made a month or two ago to concede, after years of discussion, that perhaps there is some monkey business going on with Father Inire.

James, your second conclusion is a hypothesis to explain what weird thing is happening with these letters- Incus is a woman. Perhaps part of your (perceived on my part) frustration is that Roy is finding evidence to poke holes in your conclusion without offering an alternate conclusion on what is going on here (other than the default- nothing). Others might attack your conclusion by instead by proposing more plausible explanations of their own.

I'm not really "frustrated" with Roy, because, knowing him on the list as I have for quite a while, I realize where he is coming from. And I know that, often, I can't possibly get there from where I am coming from. I fully realize that my sort of analysis is for him sometimes like running a squirrel in front of a rottweiler and other times like lighting a cigarette in a flour mill.

The fact is, I didn't originally decide that Incus was a woman based those letters or Hyacinth's sacrifice. I stumbled upon a few things Wolfe was doing thematically and saw --to my surprise-- that he was treating Incus consistently as female. It was only then that I knew what to do with the peculiarities of Incus's letters presented themselves as major lacunas, because _then_ I knew what to do with them. The textual clues began to present themselves (including ones I didn't denote because they are just too incidental and are part of other tricky puzzles). It's a very illustrative example of the idiosyncrasies of human perception. Its not just an assortment of parts that I've fitted together to see if they go (I do that often as well). It's more like a word in a crossword puzzle that was 1) built entirely from the other answers and 2) precisely fits the definition. Consequently, because of the way I came to this conclusion, if Wolfe himself told me that Incus was not female, I'd call him a g d liar (not that I think that will happen). It is as clearly stated in the text for me as the question of whether there are inhumis on the Whorl.

This is not the sort of process that Roy can possibly respect. I understand that and I understand why. That's cool.

I was fully expecting some kind of dramatic "reveal" regarding Incus in "The Book of the Short Sun" and was perplexed that it didn't happen -- just another peek-a-boo with Maytera Corn. Who is Wolfe writing these puzzles for anyway?

Ultimately, Roy's posts are more useful to me than they are to himself, since he (often rather consciously) adopts the most philistine pose and forces me to come to him. This always helps me since it I have to strip all the fuzz off my arguments to get to where he is. It usually doesn't help him at all because, for the most occult puzzles in Wolfe's stories, you can't get all the fuzz off them.

Perhaps these others could be compared to infantrymen, engaging in battle mano-a mano. If so, perhaps we can see Roy as akin to a sniper. He cannot risk his acknowledged (by me and others including Borski and Andre-Driussi) value as a defender of the lupine

gospel by betraying his own position and subjecting himself to the withering fire of the enemy.

Ehh...sometimes he proposes radical theories of his own. Not so much anymore. But it still happens. He's a cunning debater though and he is not willing to undermine his own vetting of a new explanation with alternate theories that might move the focus off the subject at hand. He forces a theory to stand or fall on its own. Which is handy for everyone. Unfortunately, most people propose theories that they are looking for help "filling out". And a fight with Roy early on can kill that discussion.

We each have our talents. If we recognize this and approach discussing Wolfe as though we are on the same team as opposed to working against each other, I think progress will be maximized. As I see it, Roy is not shooting down your theory, he is helping to improve it.

I agree. I'm quite grateful for Roy's attention when I attract it.

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My opinion is that something weird IS going on when a fictional letter is written, then re-written. And so far, James' explanation has the honor of Best Working Hypothesis on what that weird thing is. Perhaps there are other candidates?

António Pedro Marques — 16 Aug 2010, 13:36 · in reply to Lee Berman

Lee Berman wrote (16-08-2010 13:32):

My opinion is that something weird IS going on when a fictional letter is written, then re-written. And so far, James' explanation has the honor of Best Working Hypothesis on what that weird thing is.

I must admit that when I first read 'Incus is a woman' I thought it was an interesting idea. But James's explanation of his theory made me go back to the text, and to be honest I don't read there anything remotely like what he suggests. I'm all for considering there's something there, but I see no way to make that passage say 'Incus is a woman and/or is telling Fulmar that'. I mean, I read James's effort, but I just don't find it is a possible reading of what's there.

Lee Berman — 16 Aug 2010, 13:53 · follows António Pedro Marques

James Wynn- The fact is, I didn't originally decide that Incus was a woman based those letters or Hyacinth's sacrifice. I stumbled upon a few things Wolfe was doing thematically and saw --to my surprise-- that he was treating Incus consistently as female.

I think we are in general agreement on the structure. I don't agree that the order one uses in perceiving the structure is important (except as personal anecdote).

People's brains work differently and I give credit to Wolfe for providing us with more than one path to the solutions to his puzzles. When I see one avenue to a solution it might be interesting. If a second path leads to the same place I take serious note. More than that and, as you say, it becomes as clear in the text as that there are Inhumani on Green.

António Pedro Marques — 16 Aug 2010, 14:02 · in reply to Mo Holkar

Mo Holkar wrote (16-08-2010 10:53):

At 00:10 16/08/2010, Lee wrote:

Mo Holkar: Just on a zoological note: a fulmar is not a type of gull, but a type of petrel. Apart from both being birds, fulmars and gulls are not related at all.

Well, they are both seabirds comprising a smaller much smaller subset than that which would include owls and ostriches.

Although they are in that sense more closely culturally associated with gulls than are owls and ostriches, really they are no more closely related to them than those other birds are. "Seabirds" is not a genetic relationship grouping, just a behavioural coincidence of habitat.

(Of course, Wolfe may have just been intending a cultural association of this sort in Fulmar's name, as it might have been difficult to find an actual gull-based name that didn't include the obvious word "gull".)

Biological species on the Whorl need not be the same as here. It's perfectly possible for there to be a genetically close relative of gulls there that would merit to have its name translated as 'fulmar'.

James Wynn — 16 Aug 2010, 14:13 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

:

Antonio - I must admit that when I first read 'Incus is a woman' I thought it was an interesting idea. But James's explanation of his theory made me go back to the text, and to be honest I don't read there anything remotely like what he suggests. I'm all for considering there's something there, but I see no way to make that passage say 'Incus is a woman and/or is telling Fulmar that'. I mean, I read James's effort, but I just don't find it is a possible reading of what's there.

This is cool. I detailed why Incus is a woman for general informational edification, rather than for help working out the theory. As I said, it's a point of fact for me--beyond proving, debating, or working out. And, as I was also surprised to learn, Incus's true sex does not affect the plot much at all (except it clarifies why Silk, on the floaters, thought Incus was the best augur to shrive Marble after her marriage to Hammerstone and the enigmatic references to Maytera Corn bring a smile to my lips).

For me, the closely related issue that Wolfe mapped the Long Sun plot over the life of Aristaeus is a much bigger deal. Yet, most people don't have the background to see it, nor the interest to care one way or the other.

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Gerry Quinn — 16 Aug 2010, 14:16 · in reply to James Wynn

From: James Wynn

I don't see what the gender of either chem has to do with anything.

Me neither. When Incus writes "our friend Bee. Bee himself." and then decides "Fulmar would be utterly thrown off the scent by _the male pronoun_", he is not referring to the sex of any chem. But there is no reference to Bittersweet in the first email.

The message was: "I can't make it tonight." The rest is chit-chat.

Why not just say, "I can't make it tonight due to Chapter duties"? Why reference Bittersweet at all? Once again, there is no mention of Bittersweet in the first email. Yet it was considered riskier than the second where you suppose Incus is employing a code name for Bittersweet.

The first letter contained details of his mission: "I am to go to Limna tonight... to consort with fishermen in search of a woman". That would completely identify him if intercepted, and his calling Remora an old fool elsewhere in it would probably not help his case.

Incus is attempting to reveal herself to Fulmar, "my dear friend". It seems, she is in love and knows the relationship will not progress as long as Fulmar continues to consider it fraternal. (It's not "Victor Victoria", it's "Yentl".)

It may be so.

She wants to impart the information in a way that Fulmar will come to the conclusion himself. She is afraid of shocking him.

It's interesting to me that you presume the letters have to do with a desire to see Bittersweet's demonstration. In my experience, most readers think Incus is attempting to reveal a homosexual love for Fulmar. I hope I at least shown that that is not likely.

Well, if Incus is in love with Fulmar, whether it is a homosexual or heterosexual love depends mainly on what Incus has under his robe, about which we can really only speculate! For the record though, I think your theory that Incus is a woman is somewhat plausible, but I wouldn't discount the possibility that he is a man.

- Gerry Quinn

Gerry Quinn — 16 Aug 2010, 14:28 · in reply to James Wynn

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

But now there is no way for Fulmar to know who is writing the letter now.

That was what was so important before, no?

Incus may have expected him to figure it out.

I don't suppose it matters that masculine pronouns are used to describe Incus in the list of characters at the front of the book.

No. That would be an utterly trivial argument. Maytera Marble is described as "she" in the list of characters in front of the book-- the pronoun is strictly formal. She is not physically a woman.

Chems come male and female just like bios; this is not a meaningful argument IMO.

However, I don't think the use of the male pronoun is significant. Wolfe would have changed it if he had clearly revealed Incus to be a woman, but he does not reveal all in the lists of characters. The description of Pas changes from list to list as more is revealed.

- Gerry Quinn

Mo Holkar — 16 Aug 2010, 14:38 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

At 15:02 16/08/2010, Antonio wrote:

Biological species on the Whorl need not be the same as here. It's perfectly possible for there to be a genetically close relative of gulls there that would merit to have its name translated as 'fulmar'.

Although that is certainly a possibility, it would seem to render vain any attempt to infer meaning from any of the character names.

For example, if I was trying to persuade people that Silk was not really connected to Tussah, I might hypothesize that on the Whorl, tussah moths are not related to conventional silk moths. In fact, on the Whorl "silk" might not mean moth caterpillar fibre at all -- it might be spun from the soft underfur of nocturnal primates.

Personally, I feel it would be unlike Wolfe to "cheat" by secretly departing from Earthly taxonomy in a deliberately misleading way like that, in order to obscure an implied name-link: if

these hidden name-meanings were really intended, they must have been intended to be logically comprehensible to the careful (Earth-based) reader.

But that is just my feeling: you could easily be right.

best wishes,

Mo

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WolfeWiki -- a wiki about Gene Wolfe
<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

James Wynn — 16 Aug 2010, 16:47 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

On 8/16/2010 9:16 AM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

Gerry Quinn -- Well, if Incus is in love with Fulmar, whether it is a homosexual or heterosexual love depends mainly on what Incus has under his robe, about which we can really only speculate! For the record though, I think your theory that Incus is a woman is somewhat plausible, but I wouldn't discount the possibility that he is a man.

I see your point.

But for me, I see proofs (which, granted, are of a nature that you might not find compelling) that --without these letters -- would have strongly inclined me to believe that Wolfe was thematically associating a homosexual Incus as a female. (And I would have been embarrassed for the man.) "Soldier of the Mist" inclines me to think he would not be so naive. And gratefully, we do have these letters and the sacrifice of Hyacinth that cause me to *not* imagine Maytera Corn as the Prolocutor prancing around in female drag calling himself "Hymencallis".

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Roy C. Lackey — 16 Aug 2010, 19:18 · in reply to James Wynn

At 04:45 CDT this date, James Wynn wrote:
Roy,

I don't think you and I are going to come to an agreement about this.

Agreed.

At 08:25 CDT this date, he wrote:

[snip]

Consequently, because of the way I came to this conclusion, if Wolfe himself told me that Incus was not female, I'd call him a g d liar (not that I think that will happen). It is as clearly stated in the text for me as the question of whether there are inhumis on the Whorl.

And at 09:14 CDT this date he wrote:

This is cool. I detailed why Incus is a woman for general informational edification, rather than for help working out the theory. As I said, it's a point of fact for me--beyond proving, debating, or working out.

[snip]

If nothing that I, or Wolfe, or anyone else *can* say can change your mind, well, that speaks for itself. There is nothing left to say.

-Roy

Stuart Hamm — 16 Aug 2010, 19:20 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

It is as clearly stated in the text for me as the question of

whether there are inhumis on the Whorl.

I'd like to hear the answer to this one!

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? ??

--- On Mon, 8/16/10, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:

From: Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net>
Subject: Re: (urth) Patera Incus
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Date: Monday, August 16, 2010, 12:18 PM

At 04:45 CDT this date, James Wynn wrote:

???Roy,

I don't think you and I are going to come to an agreement about this.

Agreed.

At 08:25 CDT this date, he wrote:

[snip]

Consequently, because of the way I came to this conclusion, if Wolfe himself told me that Incus was not female, I'd call him a g d liar (not that I think that will happen). It is as clearly stated in the text for me as the question of whether there are inhumis on the Whorl.

And at 09:14 CDT this date he wrote:

This is cool. I detailed why Incus is a woman for general informational edification, rather than for help working out the theory. As I said, it's a point of fact for me--beyond proving, debating, or working out.

[snip]

If nothing that I, or Wolfe, or anyone else *can* say can change your mind, well, that speaks for itself. There is nothing left to say.

-Roy

James Wynn — 16 Aug 2010, 20:16 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On 8/16/2010 2:18 PM, Roy C. Lackey wrote:

If nothing that I, or Wolfe, or anyone else*can* say can change your mind, well, that speaks for itself. There is nothing left to say.

Wolfe has said it already in the text in many various ways. So, properly, you should say "anything *more* Wolfe can say".

As for you, Roy, the majority of the most important proofs that Incus is female are philosophically beyond your willingness to look at, let alone dispute. So there ya are.

Anyone else? If someone were prepared to discuss the mythology of Aristaeus as detailed by Pindar, Herodotus' History of the Persian War, Plutarch's Lives, and Robert Graves' "The Greek Myths" (all important references for Wolfe at least through the 80s and 90s) then I suppose we could have a starting place to dispute. Then we could move on to Hesphaestus, Apollo, and Orion and the other things.

But if it's just a matter of going round and round on the subject of whether it means anything that Incus underlined "a woman" and "myself" in the letter to Fulmar (as you and I surely would do), or whether all the associations between the word "hymen" and Incus's name is mere nephelomancy, well, what's the point? _I'm right on this issue. You are wrong._ You just don't have the background in certain specific items of literature to see that you are wrong. And it makes you spit nails if anyone says that a lack of anything besides the text itself would make one of Wolfe's puzzles unsolvable beyond any doubt.

If I tell you "This artwork of splotches contains a picture of Jesus" and your only answer is "I don't see it and it's not there" , then where are we going to go from that? I'd rather discuss something productively. How about the fact that Pike's Ghost is the Rajan in dream-travel what that would mean about the old patera's true heritage? Or that Rose's hands belonged to Molybdenum. I'm prepared to argue about that without reference to anything but the text.

u+16b9

Lee Berman — 16 Aug 2010, 20:33 · follows James Wynn

"If nothing that I, or Wolfe, or anyone else *can* say can change your mind, well, that speaks for itself. There is nothing left to say."

Is this one of those "Philistine poses" that was mentioned?