

Dante Thoughts

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 12 Apr 2001

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James Jordan — 12 Apr 2001, 15:38

At 11:43 AM 4/12/2001 -0500, Adam wrote:

I like this, though I don't know if Wolfe intended it. But surely Purgatory would be the Whorl _and_ Blue, with the conversation with Remora corresponding to the final purging of Dante's sins; and the undepicted voyage to the stars would be the Paradiso. That would make either Seawrack or Nettle Beatrice; either would fit. But who is Virgil, then? Since Virgil left Dante at the end of the Purgatorio, the logical candidate would be Horn's spirit, which (as I've argued before) leaves Silk's body around this time; which would mean that it is Silk who corresponds to Dante.

The logical candidate for Virgil is Oreb, especially since Oreb, while at one level a figure of the Holy Spirit, is throughout this time ridden by Scylla, a political and pagan type of character. True, Oreb is not left behind at the end, but Scylla has left him (right?).

I wonder if more could be done with this. I recall that when Horn fell into the pit, in OBW, he says that this was the end of all his happiness. "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here"? Entrance into Inferno? The rest of Blue would be Limbus Patrum, Green would be Inferno proper, and Whorl would be Purgatorio.

Beatrice would seem to be both Seawrack and Nettle, in that Horn and later the Narrator frequently think of both of them in idealized terms. The real-life Beatrice, for those who may not know, was a young girl that Dante fell in love with, though he and she were married. Nothing happened, of course, this being courtly-love. And then she died very young. She became his ideal and inspiration, and the departed literary-Beatrice conducts Dante through Paradiso after his journey with the "good pagan" Virgil through Inferno and Purgatorio.

I suppose Mantis needs to produce a chapbook on literary allusions and underpinnings of the SS books, showing the Odyssey and Divina Commedia sequences.

Interesting. Wonder if Wolfe really intended it....

Nutria

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 12 Apr 2001, 15:26 · follows James Jordan

The logical candidate for Virgil is Oreb,

Actually, I think either Krait or (most likely) Sinew, both of whom accompany the Narr -- oh, Hell, _that_ at least is definitely all Horn -- to Green and are left behind there in various ways. (Yeah, okay, I know... Vergil is left behind at the Purgatorio-Paradiso transition, not the Inferno-Purgatorio transition...)

I wonder if more could be done with this. I recall that when Horn fell into the pit, in OBW, he says that this was the end of all his happiness. "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here"? Entrance into Inferno?

Actually, I've been puzzling over the "three beasts" of the opening of Inferno; that's the sort of thing Wolfe would almost certainly parallel in some way.

The rest of Blue would be Limbus Patrum, Green would be Inferno proper, and Whorl would be Purgatorio.

Do you mean the worlds or the books?

Beatrice would seem to be both Seawrack and Nettle,

Primarily Nettle, I think...

The real-life Beatrice, for those who may not know, was a young girl that Dante fell in love with, though he and she were married.

Key word missing here: "...were NOT married." Clearly JJ knows this and this was a typo (or brainfart or whatever).

Interesting. Wonder if Wolfe really intended it....

I'd guess yes but I'd have to ask him. Which I don't really expect to have the opportunity to do...

--Dan'l

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James Jordan — 12 Apr 2001, 18:21 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

At 03:26 PM 4/12/2001 -0700, Dan'l wrote:

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Actually, I think either Krait or (most likely) Sinew, both of whom accompany the Narr -- oh, Hell, that at least is definitely all Horn -- to Green and are left behind there in various ways. (Yeah, okay, I know... Vergil is left behind at the Purgatorio-Paradiso transition, not the Inferno-Purgatorio transition...)

Hmmm. I'd see those two boys as anticipations of Hoof and Hide, and fitting more with the Odyssey theme, Odysseus meeting his son toward the end of his journey paralleling the Narrator's meeting Hoof and Hide toward the end of his. I'd still plug Oreb, for now....

Actually, I've been puzzling over the "three beasts" of the opening of Inferno; that's the sort of thing Wolfe would almost certainly parallel in some way.

Krait, Seawrack, and Babbie? Probably not.

The rest of Blue would be Limbus Patrum, Green would be Inferno proper, and Whorl would be Purgatorio.

Do you mean the worlds or the books?

I meant the rest of OBW, after the fall into the pit. Sorry.

The real-life Beatrice, for those who may not know, was a young girl that Dante fell in love with, though he and she were married.

Key word missing here: "...were NOT married." Clearly JJ knows this and this was a typo (or brainfart or whatever).

Duh. Mea maxima culpa.

Nutricious

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Adam Stephanides — 18 Apr 2001, 19:25 · follows James Jordan

I think it might be more productive, instead of seeking a blow-by-blow correspondence with the Divine Comedy a la ULYSSES, to look for correspondences between specific episodes, not necessarily in order. Thus, Krait's rescue of Horn from the pit resembles the beginning of the Inferno, where Virgil leads Dante out of the dark wood. But it also resembles Dante and Virgil's climbing up Satan's body out of the lowest circle of Hell: Horn in the pit is at a low point, both physically and psychologically; the lowest circle of Hell was for traitors, and Horn becomes a traitor to his family, whatever the pressure he was under; and being lifted out of a pit by an inhumu is similar to climbing out of a pit using Satan as a ladder.

Similarly, in Cantos XXI-XXIII Dante and Virgil have to cross a series of ditches, and find that the bridge across one of them is shattered. A demon falsely tells them there is another bridge further on, and convinces them to accept as guides to it a group of demons, who later turn on them. This is reminiscent of Horn and Sinew's boarding the lander which they think will take them to Whorl, but which is controlled by inhumu and aimed at Green.

--Adam

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