

Oh That Hy!

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 02 Nov 1998

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Alice Turner — 02 Nov 1998, 01:33

Well, she is beautiful and passionate, a combination that is pretty attractive. If you want a more literary interpretaion, I figured that it was related to the allegory of the church as the bride of Christ which is also tied up with Mary Magdelene imagery ("whoring after false gods" sort of thing). Silk is a redemptive figure (though not exactly Christic) and Hy seemed to me to be the worldly person who is loved, for all of their faults and failings. Certainly Silk is on a mission to save her - especially at the very end of the book.

My goodness, that seems a bit much. My own opinion simply is that Hy is No Better Than She Should Be and also Big Trouble, and that we haven't heard the last of her--she's much too devious and useful a character to abandon (alga crosses her cilia and hopes).

I'm still not sure I understand the change in Silk that takes place after he and Hy sleep together and he has a second illumination from the Outsider. (It's also been a while since I read that part.) Silk certainly seems changed to me. But the storyline also seems to get murkier.

This is so (both the change and the murkiness). That's why I'm hoping very much that Wolfe doesn't simply pitch us forward by decades, leaving our old friends in the past. That would be sadistic.

-alga

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

Michael Straight — 02 Nov 1998, 08:39 · follows Alice Turner

On Mon, 2 Nov 1998, Alice Turner wrote:

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I don't know. Even I who reject a lot of the allegorical interpretations that get passed around on this list thought that the "flawed bride of Christ" stuff was as blatant as Silk having a lame foot, his "death" and resurrection.

Of course, I think the Bride of Christ is also Big Trouble and maybe even No Better Than She Should Be.

-Rostrum

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Alex David Groce — 02 Nov 1998, 12:06 · follows Michael Straight

Rostrum said:

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Which seems to be a fair description of the church at various times, so it works very well on both the self-sacrificing God-like love and the "silly nice priest falls for treacherous but hot lady..." As to the second Enlightenment after the honeymoon, it seems to imply that the Outsider approves of Silk wedding Hy (by the way, who else thinks that ONLY Wolfe would have a massive four-volume series and put a double wedding involving the four major characters offstage!). Thus giving the allegory a big boost.

I'm still betting on Hy as head of the Trivigaunti spies, as well.

Although how important (if it's true) that will be in Short Sun (assuming she shows up) I don't know.

Another thing, that just struck me today--I suspect this is pure coincidence, but doesn't Hyacinth actually work fairly well as being named after the Hyacinth girl in "The Waste Land?" Thus tying to Vivian Eliot, another marriage that was lots of trouble (at least Silk can be sure Hy won't be sleeping with Bertrand Russell, unless things get very odd...)

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." - John 8:32

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Alice Turner — 02 Nov 1998, 18:50 · follows Alex David Groce

A letter I read today in the New York Review of Books can be seen as support for the theological reading of Silk. It responds to an essay by Simon Leys entitled "The Imitation of Our Lord Don Quixote" by quoting a letter from Doestoevsky to his niece about the novel he is writing:

"The main idea of the novel is to present a positively beautiful man. This is the most difficult subject in the world, especially as it is now....There is only one positively beautiful man in the world, Christ, and the phenomenon of this limitlessly, infinitely beautiful person is an infinite miracle in itself....I'd only mention that of all the beautiful individuals in Christian literature, one

stands out as the most perfect, Don Quixote...Wherever compassion toward ridiculed and ingenious beauty is presented, the reader's sympathy is aroused. The mystery of humor lies in the excitation of compassion."

The novel D. was working on was, of course, -The Idiot-, which features Prince Myshkin (as this letter-writer, Lev Loseff, states) as his own variation on "Christ as Don Quixote" or "Christ Ridiculous." Leys responds generously and warmly, calling the association between Quixote and Myshkin "apposite and illuminating."

As I hope this post might be.

-alga

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