THIRTEEN ASSUMPTIONS FOR YOUR

KINGKILLER REREAD

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http://lanceschaubert.org/2017/10/17/doors-stone-release-prep-kingkiller-reread-intro

I bundled my assumptions into a sort of reader's guide that you can have at your side while reading along with me. I'll summarize them here before we begin, but if you want the full explanation of each, go here.

Assumption One: Amateur Reflective Reading

I approach the work as a layman reflective reader and not a professional critic. There are benefits and drawbacks to this. The drawbacks are obvious. As to the benefit, I'll quote Lewis:

"I write for the unlearned about things in which I am unlearned myself. If an excuse is needed (and perhaps it is) for writing like this, my excuse would be something like this. It often happens that two schoolboys can solve difficulties in their work for one another better than the master can. When you took the problem to a master, as we all remember, he was very liekly to explain what you understood already, to add a great deal of information which you didn't want, and say nothing at all about the thing that was puzzling you. I have watched this from both sides of the net; for when, as a teacher myself, I have tried to answer questions brought me by pupils, I have sometimes, after a minute, seen that expression settle down on their faces which assured me that they were suffering exactly the same frustration which I had suffered from my own teachers. The fellow-pupil can help one he has recently met. The expert met it so long ago that he has forgotten. He sees the whole subject, by now, in such a different light that he cannot conceive what is really troubling the pull; he sees a dozen other difficulties which ought to be troubling him but aren't.

"I write as one amateur to another, talking bout difficulties I have met, or lights I have gained—"

From the Kingkiller Chronicles with the hopes that this might at any rate interest and sometimes even help other inexpert readers. I am "comparing notes," not presuming to instruct.

Blind leading the blind, in other words. Which happens all the time in New

York when someone's first learning how to use a seeing eye dog or a blind man's cane. It also worked pretty well for John Newton and John Milton and, as it turns out, St. Francis near the end:

Brother fire, I pray you be tender with me.

Before they seared out his cataracts.

Assumption Two: Poverty Dynamics

One of the things Rothfuss cares about the most is the economic reality of the lives of most people. He started a nonprofit to address these issues WAY sooner than any other author for starters, but he did it precisely because he understands that money given earlier helps sooner: it's not right for him to hoard wealth his entire life and then start a foundation that props up the same broken system. Sometimes I think we wouldn't have to hold galas for poverty relief in New York City were they never sponsored by Goldman Sachs. Participation in the system itself is the start of the problem and obedience (meaning not stealing from the poor in the first place) is better than sacrifice (meaning giving from your dragon hoard only after you've taken everything).

That said, I'm putting this first because it's the one that matters most in the real world and to remind everyone that Worldbuilders is coming up again, so donate.

But I'll also pay close attention to the sorts of things he's saying about poverty, wealth, power, fear, and weakness. If nothing else, he seems to be critiquing the rags-to-riches stories of Horatio Alger — and the American Dream — saying two things: one, this is an exception that proves the rule, not the rule. And two, what happens to the guy who gets everything he wants? Is there a corollary of riches to rags?

Was Scrooge once poor?

And are the poor some of the most blissed people in the world because of this?

I would point people to books like *Make Poverty Personal* and *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* and *White Trash: The 400 Year History of Class in America* and *A People's History of the United States* as well as recommend you spend some time overseas in a slum and, as Mother Theresa said, "find your Calcutta."

Or, if you prefer, Shane Claiborne: "The problem isn't that we don't love the poor. The problem is that we don't know the poor."

Assumption Three: Literary Alchemy.

Literary alchemy is a way of using the symbol system of esoteric alchemy in order to demonstrate the internal change of the main character that moves them towards some sort of irrevocable choice. It's confusing because often people confuse alchemy with chemistry — including some of the alchemists — so people don't realize that not everyone wanted to turn literal lead into literal gold. Because we're talking about magicians in a story who unbind principles and platonic forms and combine them in such a way that they may, in fact, turn literal lead within this literary work into literal gold, it compounds the problem in a meta kind of way.

But Rothfuss is nothing if not self-referential.

Essentially what you need to know for now is that alchemy uses a series of symbols that show how the main character first strips off the old self, gets filled with new ideas, and then implements those ideas in his new self. In this case, we're talking about Kvothe — what happened to him, how it changed him, what he did about it. Typically the system employs, at very least, the color black for purging (Notw), the color white for filling (WMF), and the color red for the resulting irrevocable action and permanent change we will see in the final Doors

of Stone release.

Sometimes, it goes a step further as with both Lewis and Rowling who used the following pacing of alchemical metals overlaid on top of astronomy in order to show first the passiveness (or readiness or preparedness) of the soul of Narnia and Harry respectively and then to show the active side of spiritual revelation and action, the set arranged as a sort of contrasting of active and passive aspects:

1. Saturn (lead)
2. Jupiter (tin)
3. Moon (silver)
4. Mercury (quicksilver)
5. Sun (gold)
6. Venus (copper)
7. Mars (iron)

Other times the passive purging, filling, and active revelation take the form of the actual steps in the *opus alchymicum*:

1. Calcination
2. Solution (or dissolution)
3. Separation
4. Conjunction
5. Putrefaction
6. Congelation
7. Cibation
8. Sublimation
9. Fermentation
10. Exaltation
11. Multiplication
12. Projection

Or:

1. Purgation
2. Sublimation
3. Calcination
4. Exuberation
5. Fixation
6. Solution
7. Separation
8. Conjunction
9. Putrefaction in sulphur
10. Solution of bodily sulphur
11. Solution of sulphur of white light
12. Fermentation in elixir
13. Multiplication in virtue
14. Mulitplication in quantity

All of this unbinding of principles and rebinding them into new forms over and again creates a philosophers stone which turns any common metal into gold and any liquid into the elixir of life (purity and immortality).

Of course in Kvothe's case, the immortality seems to be a sort of curse. So Rothfuss may be subverting even the alchemical great work.

We'll be using Burkhardt's *Alchemy*, and Lundy's *Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* as well as Redgrove's *Alchemy: Ancient and Modern*.

Assumption Four: Parody of Tropes

We're talking about a man who has read more fantasy and science fiction literature than most of the editors in the genre. He's like my wife: I can imagine him getting grounded *for reading*. It's the exact opposite experience that I had growing up, where the jocks and burly guys of Southern Illinois made fun of me

for reading so that I had to sneak it in wherever I could find it, mostly at home.

No this guy knows the tropes.

Which is why — at very least — we're dealing with a sort of reverse Hero's Journey. Instead of going from the familiar to the foreign to the familiar again, instead of going there and back again, we're coming back and then going there again. Most Hero's Journey stories start with some sort of zone of comfort that the hero's in — some hometown or prison or steady job. Then they hit the road and enter something unfamiliar.

Kvothe was literally born on the road. Then he entered stability. I'm willing to bet he returns to the road at the end.

To compound matters, almost every DnD campaign that ever was begins with random strangers meeting at an Inn. In this case, the campaign focuses not on the guests, but on the innkeeper himself: he's the one who has seen the world, who has settled down, who sees all sorts of people come through his pub, and from the wisdom of experience, he simply serves.

But what if he hit the roads again?

We'll use Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* for this because if anything, he seems to be turning every single beat of the hero's journey on its head, making some figurative parts literal and vice versa while making other things simply mean the opposite such as swapping foreign and familiar, the journey and the return, and so forth. In many way's it's a hero's journey to rid oneself of the need for a hero's journey, which is again an exception that proves the rule.

I kind of wish he would have finished Rowling if only to see precisely how (as Granger claims) she parodied Lewis and therefore how Lewis parodied Edith Nesbit who tried to steer fantasy away from secondary worlds.

Assumption Five: Nested Stories

People typically notice the frame story and the backstory, but this is a story about the nature of stories. It's far more complicated than that. Kingkiller works less like Arabian Nights and more like Russian dolls. By my count, there are at least seven stories going on:

1. The story of Silence
2. The frame story
3. Kvothe's version of events. What I'll call the waking myth: the old magic and the poor.
4. Chronicler's version of events. What I'll call the demythologizers: the team that literally Lacks Less than others.
5. Bast (and Bast's people's) version of events
6. What actually happened
7. The mythology

The main reason I bring up this and the next assumption is that Rothfuss himself linked to a PhD review of his book that referenced the power — and currency — of stories. I'll try to parse them as much as I can, but it's tricky as we're only getting snippets of anything but the obvious. And to compound matters, Kvothe's purposefully unreliable because…

Assumption Six: Names are Stories because Identities Are Narratives

Though the download is filled with all of the relevant quotes and elaborations, I'll quote Treebeard the Tree Shepherd here:

"I am an Ent, or that's what they call me. Yes, Ent is the word. The Ent, I am, you might say, in your manner of speaking. Fangorn is my name according some, Treebeard others make it. Treebeard will do."

"An Ent?" said Merry. "What's that? But what do you call yourself? What's your real

name?"

"Hoo now!" replied Treebeard. "Hoo! Now that would be telling! Not so hasty. And I am do thing the asking. You are in my country…. Who calls you hobbits, though? That does not sound elvish to me."

"Nobody else calls us hobbits; we call ourselves that," said Pippin.

"Hoom, hmm! Come now! Not so hasty! You call yourselves hobbits? But you should not go telling just anybody. You'll be letting out your own right names if you're not careful."

"We aren't careful about that," said Merry. "As a matter of fact I'm a Brandybuck, Meriadoc Brandy Buck, though most people call me just Merry."

"And I'm a Took, Peregrin Took, but I'm generally called Pippin or even Pip."

"Hm, but you are hasty folk, I see," said Treebeard. "I am honored by your confidence; but you should not be too free all at once. There are Ents and Ends, you know; or there are Ents and the things that look like Ents but ain't, as you might say. I'll call you Merry and Pippin, if you please — nice names. ***For I am not going to tell you my name, not yet at any rate."*** *A queer half-knowing, half-humorous look came with a green flicker into his eyes. "****For one thing it would take a long while: my name is growing all the time, and I've lived a very long, long time; so my name is like a story. Real names tell you the story of the things they belong to in my language, in the Old Entish as you might say.*** *It is a lovely language, but it takes a very long time to say anything in it, because we do not say anything in it, unless it is worth taking a long time to say and to listen to."*

We'll talk about this when we get to Kvothe's introduction of his many names in chapter seven, but this passage of LOTR is key: what others call him and what he calls himself. It has to do with the etymology of the word "quothe" and its ties to the verb "to know."

Assumption Seven: Story is Magic

Whatever happened to Kvothe's name, whatever happened with the magic of the story knots, it's pertaining to the very tale we're reading. Rothfuss — I hope — seems to be less a part of the Bloomsbery crowd who treat fiction as a sort of self-congratulatory dopplejournalism and more a part of the Inkling crowd who treat fiction as mythopoetic and an act of subcreation.

Making, in other words, is story. And story is an act of making.

Why does it take *exactly* three days to tell this story?

Spell preparation makes the most sense to me. I'll quote from Tolkien's *On Fairy Stories:*

Faërie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic — but it is magic of a peculiar mood and power, a the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician. There is one proviso: if there is any satire present in the tale, one thing must not be made fun of, the magic itself. That must in the story be taken seriously, neither laughed at nor explaiend away. Of this seriousness the medieval Sir Gawain and the Green Knight *is an admirable example.*

…The magic of Faërie is n to an end in itself, its virtue is in its operations: among these are the satisfaction of certain primordial human desires. One of these desires is to survey the depths of space and time. Another is to hold communion with other living things. A story may thus deal with the satisfaction of these desires, with or without the operation of either machine or magic, and in proportion as it succeeds it will approach the quality and have the flavour of fairy-story.

…It is often reported of fairies (truly or lyingly, I do not know) that they are workers of illusion, that they are cheaters of men by 'fantasy'; but that is quite another matter. That is their affair. Such trickeries happen, at any rate, inside tales in which the fairies are not themselves illusions; behind the fantasy real wills and powers exist, independent of the minds and purposes of men.

It is at any rate essential to a genuine fairy-story, as distinct from the employment of this form for lesser or debased purposes, that it should be presented as 'true.' The meaning of 'true' in this connexion I will consider in a moment. But since the fairy-story deals with 'marvels,' it cannot tolerate any frame or machinery suggesting that the whole story in which they occur is a figment or illusion.

…It is plain enough that fairy-stories (in wider or in narrower sense) are very ancient indeed. Related things appear in very early records; and they are found universally, wherever there is language. We are therefore obviously confronted with a variant of the problem that the archaeologist encounters, or the comparative philologist: with the debate between independent evolution (*or rather* invention*) of the similar;* inheritance *from a common ancestry; and* diffusion *at various times from one or more centers. Most debates depend on an attempt (by one or both sides) at over-simplification; and I do not suppose that this debate is an exception.* ***The history of fairy-stories is probably more complex than the physical history of the human race, and as complex as the history of human language. All three things: independent invention, inheritance, and diffusion, have evidently played their part in producing the intricate web of Story. It is now beyond all skill but that of the elves to unravel it.***

(Except in particularly fortunate cases; or in a few occasional details. It ins indeed easier to unravel a single thread — an incident, a name, a motive — than to trace the history of any picture defined by many threads. For with the picture in the tapestry a new element has come in: the picture is greater than, and not explained by, the sum of the component threads. Therein lies the inherent weakness of the analytic (or 'scientific') method : it finds out much about things that occur in stories, but little or nothing about their effect in any given story.)

…Max Müller's view of mythology as a 'disease of language' can be abandoned without regret. Mythology is not a disease at all, though it may like all human things become diseased. You might as well say that thinking is a disease of the mind. It would be more near the truth to say that languages, especially modern European language, are a disease of mythology. But Language cannot, all the same, be dismissed. The incarnate mind, the tongue, and the tale are in our world coeval.

…The mind that thought of light, heavy, grey, yellow, still, swift, *also conceived of*

magic that would make heavy things light and able to fly, turn grey lead into yellow gold, and the still rock into swift water. If it could do the one, it could do the other; it inevitably did both. When we can take green from grass, blue from heaven, and red from blood, we have already an enchanter's power— upon one plane; and desire to wield that power in the world external to our mind awakes.

It does not follow that we shall use that power well on any plane. ***We may put a deadly green upon a man's face and produce a horror; we may make the rare and terrible blue moon to shine; or we may cause woods to spring with silver leaves and rams to wear fleeces of gold, and put hot fire into the belly of a cold worm****. But in such 'fantasy,' as it is called,* ***new form is made; Faërie begins; Man becomes a sub-creator.***

…History often resembles 'Myth,' because they are both ultimately of the same stuff …Small wonder that ***spell means both a story told, and a formula of power over living men.*** *…But when we have done all that research can do, there remains still a point too often forgotten: that is the effect produced* ***now*** *by these old things in the story as they are.*

…For one thing, they are now ***old*** *and antiquity has an appeal in itself. The beauty and horror of* ***The Juniper Tree*** *…has remained with me since childhood; and yet always the chief flavor of the tale lingering in the memory was not beauty of horror, but the distance and a great abyss of time… Without the stew and the bones — which children are now too often spared in mollified versions of Grimm — that vision would largely have been lost. I do not think I was harmed by the horror* ***in the fairy-tale setting****, out of whatever dark beliefs and practices of the past it may have come. Such stories have now a mythical or total (unanalysable) effect, an effect quite independent of the findings of Comparative Folk-lore, and one which it cannot spoil or explain; they open a door on Other Time, and if we pass through, though only for a moment, we stand outside out own time, outside Time itself, maybe.*

…Fairy-stories are by no means rocky matrices out of which the fossils cannot be prized except by an expert geologist. The ancient elements can be knocked out, or forgotten and dropped out, or replaced by other ingredients with the greatest ease: as any comparison of a story with closely related variants will show. The things that are there must often have been retained (or inserted) because the oral narrators, instinctively or consciously, felt their

literary 'significance.' Even where a prohibition in a fairy-story is guessed to be derived from some taboo once practised long ago, it has probably been preserved in later stages of the tale's history because of the great mythical significance of prohibitions. A sense of that significance may indeed have lain behind some of the taboos themselves. Thou shalt not—or else thou shalt depart beggars into endless regret. The gentlest 'nursery-tales' know it. Even Peter Rabbit was forbidden a garden, lost his blue coat, and took sick. ***The Locked Door stands as an eternal Temptation.***

If that doesn't scream *Name of the Wind* to you, I can't help you. But to my assumption.

I am proceeding with this reading thinking that:

1. Rothfuss is showing how history and myth are made of the same stuff.
2. That stories are spells and spells are stories.
3. That the most important part of the spell — the story — is the taboo, the unknown, and therefore the horror of breaking it or intruding upon it.
4. That the only one who can unravel a myth is a mythmaker, an elf, a fairy.
5. And that therefore Kvothe himself is one of the Fae, making this a literal Fairy's tale and an all-out war between the Mythmakers and the Demythologizers, distilled down to Kvothe and Chronicler.

Therefore:

Assumption Eight: Genre Surprise

Pat has said at multiple readings of the Princess and Mr. Whiffle and now at the end of the book that he likes stories that surprise him. And not just surprise in the traditional sense of "I didn't guess the ending" but rather "I didn't even get the genre right."

If you haven't read the Princess and Mr. Whiffle, go read it.

Okay, assuming you've done that, read on.

The Princess and Mr. Whiffle is a story about a cute little girl who is scared of monsters and so she eats them. It's a story about a cute, cuddly little cannibal.

Whatever the first chapters are cuing up, they're cuing up tragedy.

And if I'm the one guessing, I'm willing to bet it's a tragedy from the perspective of the villain.

Or worse:

A tragedy from the perspective of the monster. Or at least someone like Tom Bombadil or Beorn, to whom there's more than meets the eye.

It's quite likely that we are reading epic *horror* novels.

Assumption Nine: Magic's in the Music and the Music's in Me

Again with the theme of identity, there's some sort of spell casting going on with the singers that the formal magicians know little about — badass bardic magic our modern age normally overlooks. True musical magic of the sort we see in Lucy's horn or the song-spells of Lord of the Rings or the sirens of Greece all comes down to matching the resonant frequency of the soul with a song. If you can know the timbre of a thing, you can manipulate it as easily as if you knew its name. It's different than invocational magic — summoning a demon, for instance. It's incantational. The words and sounds matter.

And so does the siren's song.

Assumption Ten: Sympathy

The basic assumption of sympathetic magic, historically, is that like produces

like or that an effect resembles its cause and second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact is severed.

The Law of Similarity.

The Law of Contact (or Contagion)

Charms based on similarity are homeopathic or imitative.

Charms based on contact are contagious magic.

The end result is a long serious of things to do and things to leave undone. Positive precepts are charms. Negative precepts are taboos. The Locked Door in this case would be an ultimate piece of sympathetic magic meant to hold back that which it once was in contact with. A sort of pandora's box.

A great deal of the series depends upon my source for this information, and we'll get into it as in depth as my amateur reading allows. For now, know that sympathy plays as much of a hand as true names. We will be referencing the *Golden Bough* for this section as well as many others.

Assumption Eleven: Tech Depends on Magic, not the other way around

There's an article by Heiddeger I won't reference here, but it's about how inventors and develpers do what they do because they can, not because they should. There's little thought for the ethical implications of technology because ultimately technology is mystifying: it is predicated upon magic. This includes the technology of writing (Chronicler) which depends upon the magic of storytelling (Kvothe).

And therefore technology can be used for good or evil just as magic or story can.

Assumption Twelve: Meaning

We start with the author's intended meaning, but we never leave off there.

I'm not a reader's response kind of guy. But I do believe that any work of art is a dialog between author and reader. I'll quote George MacDonald:

"You write as if a fairytale were a thing of importance: must it have meaning?"

It cannot help having some meaning; if it have proportion and harmony it has vitality, and vitality is truth. The beauty may be plainer in it than the truth, but without the truth the beauty could not be, and the fairytale would give no delight. Everyone, however, who feels the story, will read its meaning after his own nature and development: one man will read one meaning in it, another will read another.

"If so, how am I to assure myself that I am not reading my own meaning into it, but yours out of it?"

Why should you be so assured? It may be better that you should read your meaning into it. That may be a higher operation of your intellect than the mere reading of mine out of it: your meaning may be superior to mine.

"Suppose my child ask me what the fairytale means, what am I to say?"

If you do not know what it means, what is easier than to say so? If you do see a meaning in it, there it is for you to give him. A genuine work of art must mean many things; the truer its art, the more things it will mean. If my drawing, on the other hand, is so far from being a work of art that it needs THIS IS A HORSE written under it, what can it matter that neither you nor your child should know what it means? It is there not so much to convey a meaning as to wake a meaning. If it do not even wake an interest, throw it aside. A meaning may be there, but it is not for you. If, again, you do not know a horse when you see it, the name written under it will not serve you much. At all events, the business of the painter is not to teach zoology.

But indeed your children are not likely to trouble you about the meaning. They find what they are capable of finding, and more would be too much. For my part, I do not write for children, but for the childlike, whether of five, or fifty, or seventy-five.

A fairytale is not an allegory. There may be allegory in it, but it not an allegory. He must be an artist indeed who can, in any mode, produce a strict allegory that is not a weariness to the spirit. An allegory must be Mastery or Moorditch.

A fairytale, like a butterfly or a bee, helps itself on all sides, sips every wholesome flower, and spoils not one. The true fairytale is, to my mind, very like the sonata. We all know that a sonata means something; and where there is the faculty of talking with suitable vagueness, and choosing metaphor sufficiently loose, mind may approach mind, in the interpretation of a sonata, with the result of a more or less contenting consciousness of sympathy. But if two or three men sat down to write each what the sonata meant to him, what approximation to definite idea would be the result? Little enough—and that little more than needful. We should find it had roused related, if not identical, feelings, but probably not one common thought. Has the sonata therefore failed? Had it undertaken to convey, or ought it to be expected to impart anything defined, anything notionally recognisable?

"But words are not music; words at least are meant and fitted to carry a precise meaning!"

It is very seldom indeed that they carry the exact meaning of any user of them! And if they can be so used as to convey definite meaning, it does not follow that they ought never to carry anything else. Words are live things that may be variously employed to various ends. They can convey a scientific fact, or throw a shadow of her child's dream on the heart of a mother. They are things to put together like the pieces of dissected map, or to arrange like the notes on a stave. Is the music in them to go for nothing? It can hardly help the definiteness of a meaning: is it therefore to be disregarded? They have length, and breadth, and outline: have they nothing to do with depth? Have they only to describe, never to impress? Has nothing any claim to their use but definite? The cause of a child's tears may be altogether undefinable: has the mother therefore no antidote for his vague misery? That may be strong in colour which has no evident outline. A fairtytale, a sonata, a gathering storm, a limitless night,

seizes you and sweeps you away: do you begin at once to wrestle with it and ask whence its power over you, whither it is carrying you? The law of each is in the mind of its composer; that law makes one man feel this way, another man feel that way. To one the sonata is a world of odour and beauty, to another of soothing only and sweetness. To one, the cloudy rendezvous is a wild dance, with a terror at its heart; to another, a majestic march of heavenly hosts, with Truth in their centre pointing their course, but as yet restraining her voice. The greatest forces lie in the region of the uncomprehended.

I will go farther.—The best thing you can do for your fellow, next to rousing his conscience, is—not to give him things to think about, but to wake things up that are in him; or say, to make him think things for himself. The best Nature does for us is to work in us such moods in which thoughts of high import arise. Does any aspect of Nature wake but one thought? Does she ever suggest only one definite thing? Does she make any two men in the same place at the same moment think the same thing? Is she therefore a failure, because she is not definite? Is it nothing that she rouses the something deeper than the understanding—the power that underlies thoughts? Does she not set feeling, and so thinking at work? Would it be better that she did this after one fashion and not after many fashions? Nature is mood-engendering, thought-provoking: such ought the sonata, such ought the fairytale to be.

"But a man may then imagine in your work what he pleases, what you never meant!"

Not what he pleases, but what he can. If he be not a true man, he will draw evil out of the best; we need not mind how he treats any work of art! If he be a true man, he will imagine true things; what matter whether I meant them or not? They are there none the less that I cannot claim putting them there! One difference between God's work and man's is, that, while God's work cannot mean more than he meant, man's must mean more than he meant. For in everything that God has made, there is a layer upon layer of ascending significance; also he expresses the same thought in higher and higher kinds of that thought: it is God's things, his embodied thoughts, which alone a man has to use, modified and adapted to his own purposes, for the expression of his thoughts; therefore he cannot help his words and figures falling into such combinations in the mind of another as he had himself not foreseen, so many are the thoughts allied to every other thought, so many are the relations involved in every figure, so many the facts hinted in every symbol. A man may well himself discover truth in what he wrote; for he was dealing all the time things that came from thoughts

beyond his own.

"But surely you would explain your idea to one who asked you?"

I say again, if I cannot draw a horse, I will not write THIS IS A HORSE under what I foolishly meant for one. Any key to a work of imagination would be nearly, if not quite, as absurd. The tale is there not to hide, but to show: if it show nothing at your window, do not open your door to it; leave it out in the cold. To ask me to explain, is to say, "Roses! Boil them, or we won't have them!" My tales may not be roses but I will not boil them.

So long as I think my dog can bark, I will not sit up to bark for him. If a writer's aim be logical conviction, he must spare no logical pains, not merely to be understood, but to escape being misunderstood; where his object is to move by suggestion, to cause to imagine, then let him assail the soul of his reader as the wind assails an aeolian harp. If there be music in my reader, I would gladly wake it. Let fairytale of mine go for a firefly that now flashes, now is dark, but may flash again. Caught in a hand which does not love its kind, it will turn to an insignificant ugly thing, that can neither flash nor fly.

The best way with music, I imagine, is not to bring the forces of our intellect to bear upon it, but to be still and let it work on that part of us for whose sake it exists. We spoil countless precious things by intellectual greed. He who will be a man, and will not be a child, must–he cannot help himself–become a little man, that is, a dwarf. He will, however need no consolation, for he is sure to think himself a very large creature indeed.

If any strain of my "broken music" make a child's eyes flash, or his mother's grow for a moment dim, my labour will not have been in vain.

That in mind, I will try my best to extract some bit of truth and beauty with every chapter, whether intended or unintended by Mr. Rothfuss. Fair territory, as David Bentley Hart said in **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**, is infinite. But that doesn't mean that foul territory doesn't exist. I will try my best not to run afoul, but as an amateur, it's inevitable.

Assumption Thirteen (the taboo number): Post-Christian

In the most important case regarding fantasy literature's attempts to "kill God" — as well as Frazerian critiques of human sacrifice — it's primarily a four-term fallacy, confusing the gods with God and demiurges with the grounds of reality — that being who donates himself to every contingent thing at every conceivable moment (which for the moment includes superstrings, gravity, nothing *per se*, and all planck time). Some time spent browsing David Bentley Hart's *Experience of God* would well serve future fantasy writers who hope to thoroughly critique Christianity *as an idea* as would time spent in Chesterton's *Everlasting Man,* Lewis's *Miracles*, and N.T. Wright's seminal work on the history of every idea of resurrection in every ancient culture, a work that meets and exceeds Frazer at every point regarding the myths of dying and rising gods and myths that require human sacrifice, blood sport, and the like.

That also meets and exceeds Campbell.

Why the hell am I talking about this?

Because this will, ultimately, lead to the definition of *which* king Kvothe killed and how Kvothe took over kingship. And Mr. Rothfuss may make the same mistake as Frazer. He might not. But then again, he may.

In either case, it doesn't mean it won't be entertaining. I enjoyed Philip Pullman and Jordan and others.

What am I getting at?

I think the idea of Kvothe Kingkiller is likely to be synonymous with Kvothe godeater.

Which god he eats concerns me as much as *whether* — narratively — he eats a god. I use the small "g" as one final philosophical punctuation for my agnostic friends (meaning: most all of my friends) and finish with:

How do you know you cannot know?

That right there is reason enough to talk about a man whose name means:

To know.

...and who seems to have killed the highest king (at least the highest king conceivable to those who equate ultimate reality with demiurges). The King of the Woods — meaning, of course, the King of the Fae. In other words, a man — or demon — who may well be a small "g" godeater.

We'll start later this week with the prologue.