

The Transubstantiation of ANU

Manifold the Fray

By The White Guar and Khajiiti M&M

From the motivations of the et'Ada, to the fate of any Prisoner, to the de facto structure of the Aurbis, many things about The Elder Scrolls universe are left intentionally vague and ambiguous. One of the biggest, at least on an in-universe scale, is the exact nature of the Godhead, the figure within whose Dream and mind lay The Elder Scrolls as we know it. If, in your reading of this writing, you are already familiar with The White Guar's work, you may recall that the name he ascribes to this Godhead, this Dreamer, is ANU--all-caps intended. But how much do we know about ANU? In his other essay, [Dreams, Perceptions, and Other Philosophies](#), he attempts to relate his understanding of how the Dreamer works, vis-à-vis Yokuda and Akavir, at least. In this essay, we are less concerned with *how* the Dreamer works, and are more interested in the individual composition of ANU as a person. Who are they? Where are they from? What information can we glean from their Dream that allows us the slightest glimpse into their identity?

In this essay, we will engage with some controversial topics. Any who know us know our stance on "canon" in lore, and so we would humbly request that those who adhere to more exclusive notions of what defines legitimacy of ideas to keep such sentiments to themselves and simply allow us to have our fun. On top of that, we will broach a topic or two that may seem controversial to some in a real-life sense, and we may be accused of bringing "identity politics" into lore. Such is, of course, not our intent, but we rather intend to offer to the reader an alternative interpretation that sheds a fascinating light on TES as a fantasy world and as a story. Yes, we are implying that TES is one cohesive story, and no, it is not about the Empire and its downfall. Read on, and we shall endeavor to explain.

Vivec

Vivec is one of the most interesting and well-developed characters ever written, not only within the confines of TES, but in all fiction. Vivec and his mercurial and dubious nature captures the imaginations of TES fans the world over. Within the Aurbis, however, Vivec is many things: a god, a mortal, a man, a woman, a corner of Enantiomorph, a Ruling King (in what capacity and to what extent is debatable), the Anticipated of Mephala, the Lord of the Middle Air, and, if the Sermons are to be believed, one who has attained CHIM.

CHIM

In this context, it is the CHIM that interests us. In *Dreams, Perceptions, I* (The White Guar) briefly—perhaps unsatisfactorily—mentioned what I understand CHIM to be. I'd like to take this opportunity to explain it as fully as I am able and to the best of my understanding.

If we understand that the Aurbis is a Dream, then it stands to reason that everything and everyone within the Dream are parts of that Dream; that is, to say that each individual is a figment of the Dreamer's imagination and may in part represent some slightest fraction of the Dreamer and his psyche. Each one of these billions of individuals, be they mortals, Daedra, et'Ada, Magne-Ge, are small fractions of the Dreamer themselves, metaphorized and personified into becoming their own entity within the confines of the infinitely complex dreamscape.

Now, given that all these are teensy-weensy "shards" of the Dreamer, they each control a small part of the Dreamer, knowingly or not. Because of this, as they come to collective agreements on any number of events of objects or people, this sways the Dreamer's opinion. We call this "mythopoesis," a term borrowed from the Greeks and used commonly in fantasy settings to explain how worshiping a deity converts into power for that deity. In TES, however, we would compare it to a joint-stock company. Everyone who owns stocks in a company has some say in how the company is run. The more shareholders that agree on an action, the more likely it is that the company will run that course. Shareholders equate to individuals within the Dream, and company equates to Dreamer.

CHIM, the syllable of Royalty, is somewhat like lucid dreaming, but a touch more complicated. In-universe, CHIM is treated as a type of enlightenment. You either arrive at this conclusion and gain sacred and insurmountable wisdom, or you zero-sum and fart-cloud your way out of existence. The conclusion required to attain CHIM (and thereby avoid becoming a literal brain fart) is that you, as an individual within this Dream, don't exist as *you* from a standpoint of objective reality. However, you *do* exist because the Dreamer exists, and you, by way of synecdoche (a poetic term—where a small part stands in for a larger whole—appropriate here, we think) *are* the Dreamer. When you realize who you are, and that it necessarily follows that everyone else in the Dream is you, as well, you gain the ability to sway the Dreamer and make changes to the Dream. You now own 51% (or more?) of the company's shares.

So why is it important to note that Vivec has CHIM?

Here's where the big interpretations come in. Vivec is the Dreamer's self-insert. ANU is experiencing his Dream through Vivec and his CHIM because CHIM makes Vivec and ANU the same. But what about Talos? He attained CHIM and has just as much funky mythic mumbo-jumbo going on as Vivec does, right? We'll get to that. We promise. We're leading up to something big, here.

The Dichotomy

Something you'll notice in TES is the constant back-and-forth between stasis and change, Anu and Padomay, Anui-EI and Sithis, Auri-EI/Akatosh and Lorkhan. Even the races themselves fall on one side of this dichotomy or another, a significant factor revolving around whether or not Lorkhan is evil. While we look at this dichotomy of stasis and change in a closed system and employ suspension of disbelief, we can certainly shrug and go "sure, that's how this universe works," but we think there could be more to it. There's a reason we distinguish ANU from Anu.

As we venture from the Dreamer itself down to the highest subgradient, we get Anu and Padomay, or Ahnurr and Fadomai, or Satak and Akel, or Atak and Kota. Sometimes there is a third entity in this gradient, being Nir, or Nirni, or whatever variation she might take. Because we are effectively one level below the Dreamer, while also being within the Dream, it stands to reason that this gradient is the most raw and honest of the Dreamer's personality. In the idea we're presenting here, we believe that Nir represents the Freudian/Jungian ego, Anu the superego, and Padomay the id. The id is attempting to destroy—or, at least, radically and fundamentally change—the “actual self” that Nir the ego represents as well as the societal structures that surround notions of identity. The superego, as the morality of a person, would, it could be argued, be susceptible to the individual's surrounding worldview. For example, people born in a religious household tend to have morals and inherent worldviews that reflect those beliefs. What we're suggesting is that Anu is societal pressure pushing itself inward and asserting its own dominance from within ANU's mind. It is what—and who—ANU believes he is supposed to be.

Anu, if we pay heed to The Annotated Anuad, courts Nir, the ego. Padomay, ANU's id, instinctually dislikes this pairing. Is it out of jealousy, as the Anuad has us believe? Or is it more principled than that? Does Padomay want to change the actual self of ANU into one that better suits who ANU truly is, and thereby destroy the social constraints that Anu reinforces? Definitely a possibility.

Vivec and Talos

We mentioned that Vivec is a self-insert via CHIM, and if Vivec is a self-insert via CHIM, then it necessarily follows that Talos, who also attained CHIM, is a self-insert as well. How can a person insert themselves twice?

This is the fun part of fiction: metaphor.

Talos is absolutely ANU's self-insert, but Talos is a representation of male dominance. He is three Men, all of whom are fearsome warriors, each one embodying some masculine aspect. Ysmir Wulfharth was a king. Zurin Arctus was a cunning sorcerer. Hjalti Earlybeard was a brave soldier and general. All three are inherently masculine. What this may mean is that Talos is the self-insert of ANU's idea of who and what they are supposed to be.

What is interesting is that Vivec and Talos have met in the past, during the Armistice between Morrowind and Talos' fledgling Empire at the beginning of the Third Era. In their exchange, Vivec granted Talos Numidium, a weapon of ultimate denial. Vivec, a realistic self-insert, gave Talos, the self-insert of what ANU believes a male should be, denial, should we choose to read the exchange this way. Vivec did not deny Talos outright, as Talos = ANU = Vivec. To deny one would be to deny both, and that doesn't get ANU anywhere.

What happens later is that Talos, upon uniting all Tamriel, mantles Lorkhan. Talos becomes the agent of change. Does this mean that the masculine identity of ANU now controls the change, or is the masculine identity of Talos *undergoing* a change?

The Nature of the Dreamer

Now let's get into the meat of this interpretation here, shall we? Where are we going with this?

Let us consider Vivec, a gender-fluid deity self-insert that ANU has placed in the Dream. Talos is the masculine identity undergoing a change. Then we consider the stasis and change and their role in determining societal roles in Anu and Padomay.

ANU the Dreamer is a transgendered woman, and is struggling with the identity issues that surround being transgendered.

We can practically feel the raised eyebrows, but bear with us, as we have some more details to back up our claim. In every iteration of Vivec, we see him referred to with male pronouns and portrayed with a predominantly male appearance. Never once does the “magickal hermaphrodite” express feminine qualities outright, except at the end of CODA, when Vivec, now a woman, marries Jubal-lun Sul. This wedding, and Vivec’s adoption of the female form, are both very important.

Immediately after the wedding, we witness the hole in Lorkhan’s (or Talos’, rather) chest, the one that bound Akatosh (Time to Space), is healed. Lorkhan, the Soul of Sithis, who is the Soul of Padomay, who represents change, has been healed, made whole, accepted. ANU has overcome the struggle of their gender identity and now knows who they are, and now understands that they can love themselves for the first time in a long time, after myriad voices telling them that they shouldn’t be what and who they are. After the wedding, Vivec and Jubal form the twin pillars of the House of We, an Amaranth founded on Love, not violence and conflict (the Dream experienced as Tamriel), which is further evidence that ANU can now rest easy, knowing that heridentity is safe.

The Anticipations

Still not convinced? Let’s look a little more at other related concepts, starting with the Anticipations (or Reclamations, if you prefer):

Azura, Queen of Dawn and Dusk is representative of periods of transition. Boethia is the Prince of plotting and overthrowing. Mephala the Webspinner embodies secrets and sex-death. Periods of change. Plotting and overthrowing. Secrets. All of these ideas are important to the process of a transgender individual accepting their identity and coming out to others. The transition being the period of change, meticulously planning how to make the transition and “overthrow” one’s previous self, and the secret that precedes the transition.

Another interesting tidbit to note: Each Anticipation and respective Tribune have an interesting relationship bearing this idea in mind. ANU tips their hand in this way, because the Good Daedra are all conducive to the coming of the Tribunal in terms of there being a less than 1:1 ratio of genders and gender roles.

Boethia is almost always depicted as a male (at least prior to Skyrim), but he is the Anticipation of Ayem, who is at once the fearsome Warrior (a masculine role) of the Three and Morrowind’s beautiful Mother of Mercy (a feminine role).

Azura is always depicted as female, and not only is she depicted as a female, but she is the archetypal female of females: Mother Soul, Queen of Moonshadow--a realm of perfumed and astonishing beauty, Lady of the Rose, and, yes, she even embodies some of the negative

stereotypes of the female gender (e.g., vanity). Yet Azura is the Anticipation of Seht, who is the stoic and calculating Mage (a masculine role) of the Three.

Mephala is androgynous but is primarily depicted as female, yet she is the Anticipation of Vehk, who is the Thief (a gender-neutral role) of the Three and is androgynous yet always-except-once presenting as male. Furthermore, it is Vehk, the one who is the “most transgender” of the Three who achieves CHIM, a state of great enlightenment.

To reiterate, Boethia and Ayem: a primarily male figure and a primarily female figure, Azura and Seht: a primarily female figure and a primarily male figure, and Mephala and Vehk: two androgynous figures, the former depicted as more feminine, the latter more masculine. All of them taught the Chimer “to be different” than the Aldmer. Perhaps we find that the Aldmer are analogous to an “original family” of the Dreamer?

The Ending of the Words

To look at certain events in the history of the Tribunal, we can see moments where this internal struggle may be present. Primarily, in the events surrounding Vivec and Baar Dau, the Dreamer/Vehk is holding back a catastrophe and presenting themselves as male in accordance with the wishes of the citizens because only by behaving as expected has the Dreamer hitherto received love and acceptance. ANU-in-Vehk is literally holding back a catastrophe by uplifting the Lie-Rock, and complying with the pressures presented by the citizens of Vivec City, who clamor for their god—not goddess—to do whatever is necessary to preserve the status quo; as long as Vehk complies with these demands, the Warrior-Poet continues to receive *conditional* love at the expense of embracing self-actualization. However, when Vivec drops Baar Dau, this may be the equivalent of ANU-in-Vehk saying, “You know what? No. Damn the consequences. This isn’t working for me anymore. This isn’t *me*.”

What’s more, the conflict between Almalexia and Sotha Sil may be an indicator, as well. ANU, through Seht, may be thinking that there has to be a way to salvage and survive this situation without radically altering everything. Ayem could be the Dreamer’s rejection of that line of thought, demonstrated by the killing of Seht, who may or may not have willingly submitted to his death upon realizing that his death (and the death of his tedious and tireless efforts to salvage and save) would contribute to the coming Amaranth of Love, to be birthed by Mother Vivec. If any of the Three is uncoordinated instinct, one who embodies emotions and flesh, it’s Ayem. Seht is arguably the most benevolent and idealistic of the Three, and he can be understood to embody moralism, rationality, and calculation. These two ideas, these left-brain and right-brain sorts of concepts may be at odds, especially with such a world-flipping personal situation like the struggle for one’s identity and self-actualization.

Vehk, naturally, plays at the duality-line, so it is he is who mediates between the two. This has some Freudian implications. ALMSIVI could be a microcosm of the Anu/Padomay/Nir Freudian trio, with Vehk playing the intermediary ego, Ayem representing the emotional and impulsive id, and Seht representing the “moral” superego.

The House of Troubles

We also give thought to the Bad Daedra. If the Good Daedra are concepts or virtues helpful to the transgender ANU’s process of actualization, then it seems reasonable to assume that the Bad Daedra are concepts or vices that hinder that same process. We tentatively propose that they’re concepts that must be both rejected and confronted:

With regard to Molag Bal, ANU must reject the dominant thinking, whether it be externally or internally sourced, that they are an encapsulation of corrupted sexuality, and they must also reckon with the troubling statistics of transgenderism and rape victimization.

With regard to Malacath, ANU must reject the accursed thinking that the externally applied shame and internalized self-loathing of their transgender identity is appropriate.

With regard to Sheogorath, ANU must confront the necessity of rejecting the idea that their “gender dysphoria” is result of an unhealthy brain.

With regard to Mehrunes Dagon, ANU must confront the idea that to realize the hope they carry may only be realized by uncomfortable revolution in their personal life; furthermore ANU must reject the self-destructive behavior they may be pushed toward as they strive to realize their hope.

Man and Mer

If these deities may have an impact, then what about the races of Nirn? We briefly entertained the idea of what the Aldmer could represent (i.e., ANU’s original family), but what of the Dunmer, the race closest to ALMSIVI? The Dunmer could be understood to be the end of the initial period of transition. No longer Chimer (i.e., a race embodying ANU thinking, “I’m working through some things”), the Dunmer are closer to ANU’s idea of, “I will do this and figure this out on my own. I know what my original family (i.e., the Aldmer) was like, and I wish they were more accepting of diversity (i.e., Khajiit), and I wish there was acceptance on my part of gender transition (i.e., Argonians), but I cannot make these happen by external force (i.e., Dunmeri enslavement of the beastfolk) nor must I disdain what I want but cannot bring myself to have (i.e., Dunmeri prejudice against other races, particularly the beastfolk). This process will take place in a crucible of my own making (i.e., Morrowind), one that is harsh and strange and beautiful and isolated.”

The conclusion that ANU comes to is that this process of growth and change must come from within, which brings us to the House of We, upheld by Vivec and Jubal-lun Sul.

Aldmeris and Atmora, Mer and Man

The main difference between all the races of Tamriel is where they fall on the verdict of Lorkhan and his guilt. The Mer see Lorkhan as an evil entity, and want to return to Aldmeris, their idealized and collective Memory of a time when they were timeless and therefore infinite. Men, however, see Lorkhan as a savior, a giver of life away from the cold and unkind untime that rendered them nonexistent. Aldmeris is a wish, a hope, that can be visualized but never realized. Atmora is the inescapable Truth of the struggle of life. Tamriel is caught between the two. Therefore, it is the case that the Mer want that Hope, while Men embrace the Truth.

The Empires of Man

To get away from the Dunmer, the Sermons, and other Eastern-Tamriel ideas, let’s look at the Empire. Over the course of three Eras (omitting the Fourth because of uncertainty), there are three Empires. In the First Era, we have the Alessian Empire. In the Second, the Reman Dynasty, and the Third brings us the Septim Dynasty. The Empires of Men rise and fall in a seemingly cyclical fashion, as if the Dreamer can’t make a decision. What is empire, but the

spreading of ideas? Talos, as we have discussed, is the self-insert that encapsulates the idea of who ANU believes society wants them to be, and spread that idea throughout Tamriel, however it failed because change *must* occur. Even Wulf, Talos' avatar says to us in Morrowind:

"The Emperor is getting old. Don't know how much longer he'll hang on. So is the whole Empire, for that matter. Getting old, that is. The Emperor and the legions have held the Empire together for hundreds of years. It's been a good thing, by and large. But maybe it's time for a change. Time for something young and new. What? No idea. Because I'm old. Old dog doesn't get new ideas. But maybe young folks like you should try some new ideas. I don't know. Could be messy. But change is never pretty."

Is Talos faltering and accepting that change must happen?

If this is the case, then this may mean that the other Empires and their rise-and-fall suggests indecision on ANU's part. They cannot decide whether they want to go through with this change or not, and they try to maintain some semblance of unity when everything in their identity is falling apart. The Alessian Empire is ANU saying to themselves, "Maybe I can get through this by being effeminate, but badass." And ultimately it doesn't work, as the Alessian Empire fails. The Second Empire of Men is ANU trying to distract themselves. The Reman Dynasty spent much of its time attempting to explore space, getting to Aetherius, colonizing Akavir, but in the end, the Reman line fails, as well. The Septim Dynasty could be ANU attempting to assert masculinity (via Talos). "I am a man, dammit, and I'm going to act like one." And then we see that that is a house of cards, as well.

The Darker Side

If you've read this far and you're still on board, there's one more sobering idea we'd like to leave you with. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics via the Human Rights Campaign, 41.8% of non-binary youth have attempted suicide at some point. Could this Dream, this attempt to "Reach Heaven by Violence" be just that? If ANU is a transgender woman (or girl? Remember, Numidium is called the "entitled teenager," after all), then this Dream may be the result of an attempted suicide, throwing ANU into a state of panicked delirium and giving us the Tamriel that we know and love.

Exeunt

In summary, the point of this essay is not to politicize lore or ruin others' enjoyment of The Elder Scrolls universe. Speaking as one of the authors, I (TWG) am not sure I accept this theory into my own interpretation of the Aurbis, but rather I had come upon this idea while discussing lore with co-author and friends, and felt the need to explore it further. That's what lore should be: having interesting conversations with people whose company you enjoy and exploring ideas that may not have presented themselves to you otherwise.

Having now submitted to you, dear reader, the Transgender Dreamer Theory, please know we don't expect anyone to accept this idea outright, though if it resonates with you and you agree with the points presented, we would be thrilled. If not, then no sweat — we're not here to police

ideas, nor are we here to tell you what's right or wrong within the confines of this fiction. As has become The White Guar's motto: lore is what you make of it. Just make it something good.

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