

Digest urth.v019.n023

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 16 Oct 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1202>

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Alice Turner — 16 Oct 1998, 19:20

Alex,

If you have the time and patience (I gather you're typing, not scanning), would you please, please put in Simon Magus (he corresponds to Ceryx in our books) as well as Severian and Severus. I would be so grateful. And don't forget to let the CE know right away, even before you send the articles in, so they can take them off the "to do" list. Thanks!

from alga:

But yes, with reservations about Erebus, Abaia & co., who are echoing the more dualist parts of Revelation. I said that Dr. Talos's play is Manichaeism. Which it certainly is--the gothic tradition to which Baldanders, Talos and all horror novelists belong is necessarily dualistic.

answered by Sarge:

"Privatio boni" won't do for Gothic novels? _Necessarily_ dualistic? Umm...well you are a micro-organism of definite opinions, so I'll just gently suggest that I'm not convinced.

When you say that the play is "Manichaeism", I take it that you mean it implies a dualistic cosmology or theology. I suppose that it does; but then it implies lots of things. Indeed, the play struck me as a somewhat tacky, improvised kitchen-sink composite of just about every apocalyptic-second creation myth that I'd ever heard. (I'm surprised the Aesir don't put in an appearance.) I suppose this is in keeping with a play-within-a-novel that is a "grand sword 'n sorcery revision of the New Testament". I really like that assessment, by the way.

and Alex:

Necessarily seems a bit much to me, as well. Maybe necessarily somewhat suggestive of dualism... Come to think of it, Lovecraft isn't dualistic--there's only a dark side...

replies:

First, thank you, Sarge, I like that phrase myself, come to think.

Manichaeism: But Sarge, that's just exactly what Mani cobbled together, a ragbag of a religion, borrowing from everything he knew of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Marcionism (Marcion taught that there were two gods: capricious old Yaweh of the OT was similar to the Gnostic Demiurge, while Jesus was son of the True God whose time would come). If he'd known about Thor, he'd have thrown him in too. Mani would have been a great scriptwriter for "Xena: Warrior Princess." And so would Dr. Talos, if he got a decent editor.

Mani's dualism came from the Zoroastrians (who supplied Meschia and Mechane to Dr. Talos) and he added the concept of Light vs. Darkness, so beloved of gothic writers. Alex, you can't say that there is only Dark in Lovecraft, for opposed to that is the normal world, represented, in Hollywood versions, by pretty suburban streets. If you don't have a norm--Innsmouth or Arkham before the horrors came--where's the scare? The American Way of Life, that's the Light. At least in novels.

I will back-pedal a bit on "necessarily," but only a bit. Since the end of the 19th century, the Dark is not necessarily a Christian dark, in fact most often it isn't. Despite the crucifix hocus-pocus, we do not think of vampires as demons of Satan; they inhabit their own Dark. Werewolves are folkloric, not Christian. Hyde, though a demon, is a metaphor for what Freud would call the id, not a damned soul. Dorian Grey hides Hyde's face behind his own (sorry about that sentence), but again it's extra-Christian.

Nevertheless, if only for convenience of term, I would argue that the gothic tradition is Manichaeic--with all the implicit messiness. Writers like C.S. Lewis and Tolkien, who tidy up the mess, have made this even clearer, but they are far outnumbered by the others. King now, a dualist to the Dark Untidy Core.

I don't want to get too off-topic here, so let me segue back. Once again, I *don't* think Briah and Yesod form a dualist universe. Yes, I do think, as Sev appears to do, that it is all One Big Thing. I do keep wondering about how Abaia and Baldanders are faring under the New Sun, fine, I think--uh-oh! If it ain't One Thing, it's Another.

But nevertheless, Dr. Talos and his play do represent apocalyptic dualism, Armagedon, Ragnarok, whatever. And it may be a mess, Sarge, but it belongs too.

-alga

Alex David Groce — 17 Oct 1998, 12:49 · follows Alice Turner

Yes, I'm typing--I could probably get my hands on a scanner but the lengths the Sev. articles were, it wasn't worth the hassle. I've sent those in already... I'm really surprised Simon Magus hasn't been done already--before I sign on for that one I'd better check how long it is--my next week at school will be largely occupied with grading homeworks, editing a group project, and writing a paper on T. S. Eliot's Ash Wednesday--but I'm guessing Simon Magus can't be too long...

On Oct 16, 7:20pm, Alice Turner wrote:
Subject: (urth) Re: Digest urth.v019.n023
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