

some questions about Death Island, Doctors, and underpeople

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 12 Aug 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/148>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Peter Cash — 12 Aug 1997, 09:46

In regard to "Tracking Song": are the "underpeople" animals that are evolving toward humanity, or humans who are devolving to an animal state? The cave city is clear evidence of an ancient and technologically sophisticated civilization existing on the planet. We are led to believe that the builders of the city simply died out. But perhaps they genetically altered themselves to better adapt to the changing climate? If so, then their plans went astray at some point, of course.

I liked "Alien Stones" also, though I found it puzzling (of course, the more puzzling a Wolfe story, the better I like it.) There is a hint at the end that all is illusion--that the entire voyage is perhaps a simulation. What do you all think about that?

Aside from the Cartesian "dream argument", it seems to me that this is a story about youth and age--and about how it would be nice if our young selves could have learned the ropes from their older (and presumably smarter) counterparts. Also, isn't it true that our young personae continue to live inside ourselves as we get old and crusty? Maybe we need to listen to the "understudy" sometimes when we make decisions.

"The Doctor of Death Island" made me furrow my brow also. (Is that the right title? I don't have the book with me--I'm talking about the story in which the prisoner was cryogenically preserved and re-awakened after 40 years or so.) For one thing, where's the island?

The prisoner's wife's "daughter"...is she a clone of the wife, created to be the prisoner's lover? Wolfe never quite comes out and says so. The "we're all books in a bookshelf" Did I miss something? metaphor was nice, but seems to get dropped as abruptly as it was brought up. What is the "brain surgeon" with the deformed hand all about?

Peter (a.k.a. "Rock")