

Jonas's memories; Time's Arrow; Aboveground

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 28 May 1999

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Robert Borski — 28 May 1999, 01:09

mantis having discoursed on my fan fictionalized version of Jonas:

<Well, this reading moves very far away from or around the evidence (however one wants to interpret said evidence) found in the antechamber. That is, if Jonas is somehow or other related to the crash-prisoners ("that name was common in lands where I was young"), and they have been living in the chamber for umpteen generations after their crash (even assuming there is a difference between "their" crash and "his" crash) . . . well.>

As usual, you bring up potent objections. My problem is that I'm not quite sure _whose_ memories Jonas is drawing upon when he relates his various antechamber reminiscences. In other words, are they native to pre-crash Jonas, who's a metal servitor of the Hierodules? Or are they native to post-crash Jonas, who as a cyborg is a melange of metal and flesh? If the latter, this seems to assume that when Jonas harvested the eyes, larynx and "other parts" of the man killed in the crash, the man's memories came included with everything else--sort of a whole package deal, or that maybe cyborg Jonas is like the laboratory hydra whose sundered halves each retain a memory of a previously learned response when whole. Unless you're also arguing the "other parts" included brain tissue and that Jonas did the alzado mind slurry cocktail thing. On the other hand, if these memories belong to pre-crash Jonas, there's less of a problem. They're part of the same mnemonic archive that Jonas draws upon when he tells Severian about the Wall and the black beans, which imho dates back to his long servitude with the Hierodules--not to a bunch of memories he's uploaded from his human biografts or picked up once Urth-bound. The details about his donor (such as Pop being a craftsman) he could have absorbed locally, especially if he takes up with his now fellow tinkers. Also: Jonas as a metal man may have already lived a long life before his accident. Hence may well have sailed with the very Asiatic star-faring race you postulate in your own History of Urth (LU, p.128), back in the age of myth, when more than a few astronauts were named Kim Lee Soong.

And no I don't believe that a single crash has marooned both Jonas and the original prisoners of the antechamber.

then the mantic one having written:

<Re: living backwards in time. While I myself often write of Yesod timeflow as going in a direction "opposite" that of Briah, I tend to think that visitors to either universe go with the local flow: Severian does not begin regressing toward foetushood in Yesod; O, B, & F do not consume waste and excrete foodstuffs <g>

Maybe you're right. Though the latter, ridiculous though it sounds, is the deft stuff of Amis's TIME'S ARROW. But I think a better paradigm is Carroll's THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, with its backwards living White Queen. Or maybe even Wolfe's own short story, "My Book," which is allegedly about the writing of New Sun, narrated in forward fashion, but relates how (and with a nifty recursive loop) the book was written backwards, from last word to first. In my opinion this

is Wolfe not just being clever, but confessional, at least in terms of how he approached the plotting of *New Sun*.

<Why does the Green Man tell Severian that Agia can be found "above ground">

Hey, good question. This one still stumps me--especially since there's another reference to it in *URTH*, p. 186: "Once I was told by a man who knew much of the future that a woman I sought was aboveground. I thought he meant merely that she was still alive." But if Agia's being alive isn't

merely what the Green Man meant, what is? My goofy take on this is that the Green Man may not know what Agia's relationship to Severian is--Severian only says, "I am looking for a woman called Agia," but no more. Hence the Green Man may be assuming the woman in question may be any number of possible females, from lover to mother to sister. ("Hello, Psychic Network--I'm looking for a woman called Agia. Nope, sorry. If you're psychic, you should already know her relationship to me.") If lover, she might be dead Thecla, who's recently been uninterred by Hildegrin for Vodalus' up-and-coming banquet. If mother, she might be Catherine, who still roams the Atrium of Time (though at least a part of it seems underground). If sister, it might be Severa. Or maybe it simply is just Agia, as has been mentioned, waiting for Severian at the Saltus mine. Something for everybody in other words--though I'm sort of partial to the Thecla scenario myself (keener foreshadowing).

Robert Borski