

Jonas in the Antechamber

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 01 Jun 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1655>

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David_Lebling — 01 Jun 1999, 09:22

mantis asks:

... the
central mystery seems to me to be: what is so upsetting to Jonas? It seems
to be something(s) that the prisoners told him, rather than just an
upwelling of empathy for their terrible situation.

My take on this, ever since first reading _New Sun_, is that a major part of Jonas' distress is the realization of how much time has passed on Urth since his departure. He tells the fairly straightforward story of the _Fortunate Cloud's_ return, remarking that the spaceport wasn't where they expected it to be (bad info, continental drift, or what?). Then on hearing Severian's tale of the Magician and his son, he realizes that the story of Theseus has mutated almost beyond recognition (his remark about the black sails). Then he discovers that the prisoners may be the descendants of people from his ship or another like it which crashed generations before (the Kim Lee Soong stuff). All three of these shocks have in common the apprehension of long spans of time.

Finally, of course, he fears that he may be imprisoned for a long time, and will never see Jolenta again.

So, we have a span of tens of thousands of years back to the loss of knowledge about the spaceport; a span of thousands of years in which the culture of his age was lost or changed; a span of hundreds of years in which the prisoners have lost the common culture of humanity; and a span of decades of possible imprisonment in which Jonas will lose Jolenta.

Last there is the span of seconds in the room of mirrors in which he regains the stars (or does he?).

Dave Lebling
(aka vizcacha)

Peter Stephenson — 01 Jun 1999, 14:05 · follows David_Lebling

David_Lebling at avid.com wrote:

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What, presumably: it's turned into a citadel, with torturers, witches, magic atria, homunculi, the works. Nowhere a hard-working sailor can land a spaceship any more. (Borskian exercise: now prove that the Matachin tower is part of Jonas' ship having passed through a time-warp. Way

beyond my competence, but maybe someone out there...)

corncrake

Kieran Cleary — 01 Jun 1999, 13:39 · follows Peter Stephenson

Dave Lebling wrote:

My take on this, ever since first reading _New Sun_, is that a major part of

Jonas' distress is the realization of how much time has passed on Urth since his departure. <<

True, and I suppose this was a dawning realisation as there probably isn't an easy way to find out how much time the average relativistic space traveller has been away simply by looking around, particularly as the Autarchs have been trying to keep society in stasis until the New Sun comes ever since the time of Ymar (as Palaemon remarks to Severian at the beginning of his journey).

Excellent work Ranjit, thank you!

Kieran C.

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