

Let me shoulder your burden, brother.

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 26 Jul 2000

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Tony Ellis — 26 Jul 2000, 14:13

corncrake wrote:

When I pointed out that Severian's meeting with the lochage earlier in Shadow was a little like Christ before Pilate, someone --- I think Tony Ellis --- quite rightly made the same objection.

Yes, that was me. Sorry. But I think you have a much stronger case with Hethor re-echoing Simon of Cyrene's charitable offer, and top marks for spotting this. (Am I the only one, by the way, who can never think of this beautiful and life-affirming Bible episode without thinking of the bit in Life of Brian where the Sainly Passer By shoulders a crucifixe's burden and the crucifixe promptly runs like hell?)

It's just struck me that the interview between Severian and the Archon is as good a candidate for a parallel of the interview between Jesus and Pilate as his meeting with the Lochage. After all, Abdiesus is a local governor, as Pilate was, and he has the same air of the educated, heartily-sick-of-the-provinces time server. But I think this just illustrates how easy it is to find parallels between the Gospels and TBOTNS.

In particular, I have racked my brains for any explanation of the doll he had in his cabin, as described in his first monologue in chapter XXX, `Night', though the nature of her `lemon-wood box' is perhaps worth consideration. (Why lemon-wood, anyone?)

She's a paracoita. A sex droid. Surely the perfect companion for the lonely sailor, far from shore? Lemon-wood because it smells sweet, I would think. In the ancient world there was a big market for rare, pleasant-smelling woods.

Totally off topic: The sad story of the Essex is indeed fascinating, especially to an Essex boy such as myself. I recommend the chapter on "The Wreck of the Medusa" in Julian Barnes' "A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters" as another compelling account of shipwreck and cannibalism at sea - as well as one of the best accounts of the creation of a work of art that I've ever read.

Slightly more on topic: one of the conceits in Barnes' novel is the idea of history repeating itself, but as a whimper rather than a bang. (The image he uses, as I recall, is the way a belch faintly brings back the taste of the hotdog you had earlier in the day.) This certainly chimes with the idea of Hethor standing in for Simon of Cyrene, and indeed with the idea of Severian standing in for Christ.

Tony Ellis

On-line Editor, PC Format magazine

01225 442244 x2349

<http://www.pcformat.co.uk>