

Cyriaca

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Aug 2000

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Jonathan Laidlow — 11 Aug 2000, 09:31

Hi Jim,

Thanks for a stimulating suggestion for rereading portions of 'Sword of the Lictor' again, specifically chapters 5-7, if anyone needs the reference.

A few thoughts in addition to those already posted. Sadly they take the form of questions, as I'm still puzzled myself:

What relevance does the context of the story have? Specifically - Cyriaca is a fallen woman - a failed Pelerine (Roman Catholic nun analogue?). Her eyes weren't right - which is suggestive of either a failure of vision (she could not 'see' the truth which a Pelerine must) or that she saw too much, that she had knowledge, specifically the worldly knowledge of sex. Certainly after leaving the Pelerines she enters into the fallen world of Eve, and she is to be killed for her promiscuity. She also seduces our hero, not that he complains. All this suggests the fallen world of post-Edenic humanity, where knowledge is the cause of the fall.

2. The archive is quite obviously, in one sense, a mythology of the library of Nessus. Cyriaca suggests that it is in Nessus and that it has a guardian. A library is a repository of knowledge, after all.

3. The story is also quite evocative of the story of Pandora's box and the evil knowledge loosed on the world, although here the knowledge is not absolute evil. Indeed, by giving up their knowledge of base Earthly things the beings lose something. They lose more when the knowledge is regained.

4. Why does Severian state that he knows 'more of it than you, but I had never heard it before' (end chap 6) What is he referring to? The obvious answer is the library of Master Ultan, but there are probably more answers which the denizens of Urth can drag up. Anyone?

Jonathan

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