

Symmetrical Fearfulness

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 07 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2562>

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 07 Feb 2001, 15:04

Responding to Talarican's list of twinings, Tom Urash observed:

And let's not forget "little Severian", struck down whilst trying
to reach the golden ring upon the hand of Typhon's monument/mountain.

... nor that little Severian is himself half of a dyad with Severa, making the Big/Little Severian dyad somehow flawed; and the deeply-flawed dyad of Agila and Agilus. Thecla and Thea come similarly to mind.

This begins to wander afield from simple twinning: much of the impact of BotNS comes from the way characters are paired, either in (true or false) dyads or in contrast (for example, Dorcas and Jolenta). As Father Inire might observe, the book is constructed of reflections that reflect reflections until something real is forced to materialize. Relations reflect each other: most notably Severian's various relations with Thecla, Agia, Dorcas, Jolenta, Cyriaca ... all of these relationships seem despite or through their radical flaws to attempt to force a true love relationship to materialize.

(Does one materialize? Near the heart of the story is a "magic square" of characters:

Severian----Vodulus

| |

X |

| |

Thecla-----Thea

Thecla and Vodulus have no real relationship, except as mediated through Severian or Thea; Thea and Severian have no real relationship except as mediated through Vodulus or Thecla. But through the alchemy of these mediated relations the broken relation between Sev and Thecla is revived, albeit in a radically different form. Can there be a true love relationship between Sev and Thecla after the communion in the woods? Or is that only amour-propre?)

Perhaps this is part of what makes UotNS unsatisfactory by comparison? It's hardly a bad book; indeed, by the standards of almost any other writer, it would be a masterpiece. But the things and relations in URTH don't reflect each other the way they do in NS proper. (This is also true of LS, and appears to be true of SS, but LS & SS have their own, quite different, structures ...)

-- all of which is not to say that URTH doesn't have its own (and quite different) structural integrity: it does. But because of its status as a pendant to NS, the reader expects and, more, wants to find those reflections, and finds only their echoes.

(What is the echo of a reflection? Can it force a real sound to materialize?)

--DDO