

The play's the thing

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 23 Nov 1997

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Alice Turner — 23 Nov 1997, 13:35

Here's my take on Dr. Talos's play:

I think it clearly parallels the only other pageant in the series, that in Urth (V), where the aquastors gather before Tzadkiel (who represents the Increate) to speak for and against Severian. In the play, the representatives of those who live on Urth gather before the Autarch, who represents the Increate, to debate the coming of the New Sun. (Note that the Autarch makes it clear that, even as an actor, he is -not- the Increate, he is merely standing in for him as the owner of the garden.)

Meschia and Meschiane represent mankind. The Contessa represents us—that small segment of first-world mankind that owns computers and reads books—as well as the exultant class. Small roles are given to the military, to a religious/philosopher type, to a servant, a judge, even to a torturer. Thus virtually everyone we meet in the book is seen in the play.

Gabriel represents the angels, and, as has been pointed out, more angelic beings are to appear in the unfinished portion of the play. Jahi represents the demon world—I think it extremely decent of Dr. Talos to give demons a say—and thus not only Shaitan, Ahriman, Erebus, Abaia, the Aschians etc., but, as mantis says, Agia. Two demons disguised as merchants also appear, and it would seem that there might be a debate with the angelic beings to come, though how this would be staged is hard to say, since I believe they are played by the women.

Baldanders's roles are downright fascinating. As Nod, he represents the elementals, the children of Urth, not only the Nephilim, Titans, Jontun, ogres, giants, trolls, creatures in the cave, Gayomart, Enkidu, etc, but also the dumb beasts who cannot speak for themselves. As the Statue, he stands for androids, demi-humans and the cacogens, but also, I think, for ruins, monuments, the nobler detritus of mankind. It's possible that he, rather than Dr. T, will play the Old Sun in the last act, yet he is crucial to the development of Ushas, or so I think.

The time is out of time, a magical midnight between the end of the Old Sun and the start of the New. The destruction which we witness in V is predicted. The actors know what their roles were in ages past, but they cannot say for sure what their new roles will be. Note that there will be a mirror in V, when Odilo, Pega and Thetis take on Meschia, Meschiane and Jahi.

Over to you.

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