

More: Dr Talos's Play

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 24 Nov 1997

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m.driussi — 24 Nov 1997, 16:07

Dan Rabin,

Yes, your list is nearly perfect. According to Wolfe, the demons are both played by Dorcas and Jolenta.

Re: the missing characters, I would make a strong bet that "the Moon" is played by Dorcas, and I'm also guessing that the women play the Angelic Beings (mirroring how they played the demons).

Tony Ellis,

Re: sons from stones in Greek myth, to be precise I believe you are thinking of Deucalion's Flood (alga note: wolves and wolfmen here), which is not exactly a genesis myth--more an eschatology and genesis myth (i.e., a flood myth). "Noah" here being Deucalion, and his wife here being "Pyrrha."

Re: acts versus scenes. Ah, so the whole misunderstanding was due to my misuse of the technical term? It happens: "scenes" they are then; a one act play with several scenes on a stage without a curtain in a Greco-Roman culture.

Re: divine week. Right, that was the nebulous theory "frosting" built upon a few layers of cake, said cake in turn concocted of solid info (cast of characters; number of internal divisions; relation of play to several eschatology, genesis, and eschatology and genesis myths; how often genesis myths use a divine week; and so on). Sorry, I really should always remember to tag mantic things as mantic and solid things as solid.

Re: why Severian ends his transcript when he does. I thought I had hammered this home a couple of times, but you've managed to get most of it despite my fumbling: yes, he is recording the play as it was performed both times. The first time, at Ctesiphon's Cross, he walked on cold and was talked/stage directed through the whole thing (as was Dorcas), and Baldanders did his scare bit; the second time, while somewhat (i.e., barely) more practiced, ended the same way.

My main point of "why" before had to do with the wrath of Baldanders.

But now I'd like to move beyond that and make a hash of why Severian is being coy about the play (or why he has to be coy about it).

The fact is, I think we all agree, that this play is a blueprint of the whole Urth-into-Ushas shebang. Playing as an actor in such a play obviously has an impact upon the actors who actually turn out to have a role in the real deal. We're back to the thorny thicket of Free Will versus Determinism. If Severian leans too heavily upon the play when he is going through the real thing, then he is just a puppet of a pre-determined Fate; if he willfully ignores the play as

he transforms the world, then he is a fool of Free Will.

The same thing is going on to a lesser extent with the stories in the brown book. They really are all messages to him about his big mission.

The same thing is going on to a much greater extent in a third text which is shrouded in such crafty silence that most readers do not know that it was read in the cell by Thecla and Severian: the original, "long lost" work (that Dr. Talos has also apparently seen), (Canog's) THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN. (No, I didn't figure this one out, despite the clues--I only learned it in an essay by Wolfe in PLAN[E]T ENGINEERING.)

(Obviously this has to be. Otherwise, Severian would always be saying to himself and the reader, "Lessee now, what did the Conciliator do next?" Rather than just going through life as it presented itself to him.)

Re: which play (whole/truncated) is "the one we are supposed to think about," I disagree. I think both are important--and often times, in Wolfe's fiction, things hinted yet =not= said are very important indeed. But everybody is entitled to a different opinion, of course.

=mantis=