

paracelsus, italian translation of BOTNS

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 12 Feb 2002

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maa32 — 12 Feb 2002, 18:32

Since Paracelsus came up, and the elixer applied to swords that can heal or harm, I was reminded of the scene in Castlevania which talks about the healing property of scabbards and of the book I am in the middle of right now: Umberto Eco's "Island of the Day Before". I have been reminded of Wolfe the whole time I've been reading it, and Paracelsus' sword and other alchemical tidbits are important to the work, which is science fiction as it might have been written in the 17th century (crossing the date line [to restore a slain friend to life] and discovering longitude with accuracy seems similar to discovering faster than light travel or something). There are several parallels between Severian's narrative and the Island of the Day Before (we should remember that the book of the new sun is popular in Italy). There is a wounded dog that is kept wounded so that the time may be accurately known (the blade used to wound the dog is exposed to irritants at noon in Europe, while the dog is taken on the journey and his wound constantly flayed with salt so that it will not heal - the alchemical sympathy between the blade and the wound allow the men on the ship to know the time and determine where they are based on the stars or something). It really reminded me of Triskele. The hero falls down the stairs in a ship like Severian falls when he is disincorporated, cutting himself with a weapon that seems to be based off of Paracelsus, with the ability to heal or destroy. It has gotten awful reviews on amazon.com, but I like it tons more than "Foucault's Pendulum", which I felt deep down was a waste of my time.

ALSO, since I have some experience reading Italian (but wouldn't consider myself fluent by any means), I actually have the Italian translation of Book of the New Sun (mainly to see how the words were translated). If we accept that a translation can accurately approximate the "spirit" of the original work, there are some interesting things that happen. The rhyme that Severian uses to hide his little coin is COMPLETELY different than the rhyme he speaks when he picks it up at the end of Citadel of the Autarch in the Italian version. Scarcely two words are the same. It is fascinating how much words can change in just a simple poem like that -> That really made me wonder about the possibility of translating an author like Wolfe, where the devil is really in the details. I wonder if some of my favorite foreign authors should really be attributed to good translators ... but then again, the Book of the New Sun claims to be a translation anyway. Marc Aramini