

Thecla's Lunatic Irritation

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 05 Mar 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3014>

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 05 Mar 2002, 17:30

Thecla (p. 239) correction, she did not exactly take her own life to avoid another session with the revolutionary, rather, she did so to avoid further torment by the in-dwelling demon summoned by the device.

I think that this bears closer examination. Rather than a device that literally summons demons (just as the Book contains hierodules rather than literal angels),

... I am thus far in agreement ...

I think that the Rev is meant to be an electroshock device of fiendish refinement that divides the brain by damaging tissue electrically and leaves the non-speaking part greatly resentful of the trauma and perhaps envious of the speaking part.

This would agree somewhat with studies of people who have had their brains divided by damage or surgical severing of the corpus callosum, which GW already used in "The Death of Doctor Island." This would explain the image of the demon as having Thecla's face, since it is part of herself.

Alas, it would disagree far more with these studies - while the "two brains" do indeed appear to have independent "behavior" and possibly even independent "personalities" (giving rise to a host of questions for soulists like myself, which have never to date been really adequately answered), the "non-speaking" portion does not appear to resent the "speaking" portion, and certainly neither portion becomes self-destructive in the way described here.

I think Mantis's "magical thinking" idea may have some merit, but even so - what happens to the victims of the Revolutionary isn't merely suicidal depression; the "demon" is actively sadistic and seeks to make the "host" suffer. (Suicidally depressed persons, deprived of the means of suicide, do not in general begin clawing at their own skin.) Whatever the Revolutionary does is significantly more complex than this.

Nonetheless, there is at least some hope for a solution in the magical thinking idea. If the Lupiverse contains angel-equivalents like the hierodules, then magical thinking not only permits but seems to require that we hypothesize demon-equivalents: and I see no reason why the Revolutionary might not actually summon one and instil it into the victim.

The division of functions is not the same as that in the RL documented

procedure, but this can be attributed to the refinement of the device by Urthly science, the general scientific accuracy of the Book, and perhaps an effort on Wolfe's part to display an internal division within human nature. The Revolutionary turns one against one's self by separating the devil already inside from the mitigating moral conscience, or perhaps it involves original sin.

Jeff Wilson

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James Jordan — 05 Mar 2002, 23:11 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

At 11:30 AM 3/5/2002, you wrote:

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--Blattid

Another aspect is that the demon made or called by the Revolutionary corresponds to the Vodalus Revolutionary party within the Commonwealth. They are bringing about the suicide of Urth, necessitating the New Sun. And, in Wolfean (Catholic) thinking, I should think that being a "revolutionary" is precisely what Old Adam was at the beginning.

Thecla's being "born again" (resurrected) in Severian parallels the black-holed sun's being born again through Severian, and the death and resurrection of Urth. Adam the Revolutionary is saved and regenerated.

Nutria

Jason Ingram — 06 Mar 2002, 03:08 · follows James Jordan

On a slightly different note, I came across a reference to a Saint Thecla that I found interesting. I'm curious how much light it on her eventual union with Severian.

The passage is from Durrell's translation and adaptation of Pope Joan by Emmanuel Royidis, and occurs in the context of an attempt by Frumentius to persuade Joanna to join him as a monk;

"[...] he continued to press her, arguing with the help of Deuteronomy and the opinion of Origen that all women would anyhow be transformed into men on the Last Day. Joanna replied to this that Origen was a heretic and, moreover, a eunuch. Frumentius however reminded her of the example of St. Thecla, sister of the Apostle Paul [...] and a host of others who had hidden their white bodies like angels' wings in the black habits of men and had acquired holiness living with monks." [p.55]

And a footnote: St. Thecla, "though not recorded as the sister of St. Paul, is said to have accompanied him on several apostolic missions. Described in Butler [...] she early felt the call of

god, and broke off her engagement with a young man, whose despair turned to hatred. He denounced her to the authorities and she was condemned to be torn to pieces by wild animals." According to this story, she lived "to a ripe old age" [p.155]. I haven't checked any sources, but even if Royidis or Durrell were fabricating the history, it resonates well.

Sepia