

Nod

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 29 Jan 1998

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Jim Jordan — 29 Jan 1998, 17:07

I know this is late, but a couple of contributions to the Play discussion.

I don't know that we have to run too far afield from the Bible itself for a lot of the factors. With Wolfe, the imagery is often "Bible + something else," with the Bible as the foundation. In this case, at the least it is "Bible + Persian creation myths."

In this case, we have Adam and Eve (with Persian names). Now, in the Bible Adam and Eve are the first humans. Their children married each other. The murderous line of Cain founded a civilization around the city of Enoch in the Land of Wandering (Hebrew: Nod). The faithful line of Seth (Abel's replacement after his murder by Cain) founded another. In the course of time, the Sethite "sons of God" started marrying the pretty Cainite girls, the "daughters of (mere) men." This resulted in a lot of "mighty men," heroes of a sort (gang leaders, probably), who had the best natural abilities of both lines, but who used their power for oppression: the Nephilim. Eventually, only Noah's family was left of the faithful Sethites, and you know the rest. Read it in Genesis 2-6.

Jewish myths, and some exegetes, suggest another interpretation, which is that the "sons of God" who married the "daughters of men" were fallen angels (demons) who literally married with human women. There are a bunch of problems with this notion, one of the principal being that such an elaborate angelology does not factor in the early books of the Bible, like Genesis. There is a third reading of this material, however, and it is the one Wolfe is using. It is this. When God made Adam and Eve, He did not really make Adam of dust and Eve of Adam's flesh and bone, but rather took a couple of pre-Adamite apelike creatures and converted them into human beings by imparting a soul to them. This notion is usually found in theistic-evolution writings. God gradually raised up a line of apes until they were almost human, and then transformed them (or two of them) into human beings. Abel and Seth and the other children of Adam and Eve married their siblings, but since Cain was driven out, he married with one or more pre-Adamite she-apes; but the offspring had souls and were human.

Someone who does not know Hebrew would think, reading Genesis 4, that the Land of Nod refers to the land of some person named Nod. In fact it means "land of wandering." (Wolfe probably knows this, of course.)

Now we have all the information necessary to unpack this aspect of Dr. Talos's play. Nod is the pre-Adamite man-ape who rules the land of Nod. He expects that one of his she-ape daughters will marry Cain when he is exiled from Adam's land. Notice that Nod describes his own way of acting when upset as jumping around, hurling rocks down on people, etc.: all monkey business. In Wolfe's Talosian parlance, the man-apes like Nod are the Nephilim.

All of this could come very easily from Roman Catholic theistic evolutionist writers that Wolfe would be familiar with.

Of course, the ape motif relates to Severian's visit to the underground monkey kingdom.

Since it has been nearly a decade since I worked through the Severian books the second time, I'm probably not going to have much to contribute to the discussion until I can get back to them.

Nutria