

brown book stories, their relevance

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 06 May 2002

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 06 May 2002, 23:37

Josh Geller quoted blattid and wrote:

... It's

pretty clear why the story of Dr. Death is present in "The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories"; it's a little less clear why the "brown book" stories are present in tBotNS, but there's no doubt in anyone's mind that they're fiction and that they're there for a good and sufficient reason.

They are not just fiction: they are myth. They express patterns of history in easily understood and transmissible terms.

'The Story Of The Student And His Son' is (among many other things) the story of the Monitor and the Virginia (the Merrimac: from the US civil conflict of the 1860's) overlaid upon the story of Theseus.

The one about the wolves and 'Fish and Frog' is (again, among many other things) an interplanetary war overlaid on the founding myth of Rome.

I wrote "A Closer Look at the Brown Book" (New York Review of Science Fiction #54, Feb. 1993). I remain quite interested.

To blattid: I think there are strong parallels between the stories and Severian's story: clearly they are oracular to Severian's situation, but I wanted to trace them down and find what patterns I could. Patterns they share with each other, patterns they share with the Urth Cycle. They seem to impart a sense of the vast sweep of posthistory, giving a historical feeling. The shortest answer might be to say that they are holographic fragments of the entire Urth Cycle.

To Josh Geller: But I don't recall an interplanetary war in "The Tale of a Boy Called Frog." The childhood and youth of the person who would eventually become the first galactic Emperor, yes, I can see that--but interplanetary war within the tale, that escapes me. Please tell me more!

=mantis=

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 06 May 2002, 23:51 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Mantis said some stuff.

To blattid: I think there are strong parallels between the stories and Severian's story: clearly they are oracular to Severian's situation,

Precisely -- they are parables, as I said the other week; but they are at least partially parables he tells to himself, for his own benefit.

To Josh Geller: But I don't recall an interplanetary war in "The Tale of a Boy Called Frog."

Dude, the whole bit where Frog's brother comes and they fight and they build the city.