

MICHAELMAS, another thread of Budrys in Urth

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 21 Sep 2002

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 21 Sep 2002, 23:55

I've just read Algis J. Budrys' novel MICHAELMAS [1976]. I have previously read ROGUE MOON, THE THORN OF AMSIR [iirc], SOME WILL NOT DIE, FALLING TORCH, and HARD LANDING. I haven't read WHO? but I know about it: the case of a guy who suffered an accident and has been repaired as a cyborg, raising questions as to his identity (and possibly his humanity). ROGUE MOON is all about the teleported astronaut working his way through a deadly alien labyrinth, knowing that the original he is based on was destroyed by the scanning process.

MICHAELMAS approaches some of this material again: there is a wounded astronaut, presumed dead, who might be real or might be fake (clone, reconstruction); there is Michaelmas himself, the ace-reporter and secretly the most wired man in the world, with his secret AI program making magic happen via the internet; there is the female reporter who looks and acts disturbingly like Michaelmas' dead wife, which might be just chance, or the fact that she spent time in a world-famous clinic in Switzerland. To me it is a Brunner big novel with some Ballardian elements and some PK Dick angles all in a short novel form.

In CASTLE OF DAYS article "Algis Budrys II," Gene Wolfe writes that MICHAELMAS is Gene's favorite Budrys novel. He also notes that while friends call Budrys 'A.J.', "though _A_ and _J_ may not be his true initials."

Anyway, BIG SPOILERS for MICHAELMAS:

In the end, the clinic in the Alps basically has a presence chamber which can draw analogs from alternate universes. Like Niven's "All the Myriad Ways," but this dingus, operated by distant alien entities that experience one of their afternoons in Earth decades, can pull an entity from its home universe and put it into ours (if I understand it correctly). So the astronaut really did die in our world, but the human conspirators fed media files on the guy into the dingus and the aliens fished up his analog and made him appear in the manifestor device.

And the human conspirators are trying to draw up a Michaelmas analog -- in fact, it is in the manifestor device and banging to be let out, but then Michaelmas makes them send it back.

Beyond all the main action there is a haunting bit at the end in that Michaelmas suspects (I think) that the female reporter, therefore, really
=is= an analog of his dead wife, rather than being a cosmetic forgery (of the conspirators) or a pure coincidence.

The wounded astronaut (WHO? and ROGUE MOON and MICHAELMAS) would be translated on Urth as crippled sailor, pointing to Jonas. The teleporting of the astronaut in both MICHAELMAS and ROGUE MOON point to the same for Jonas. The hidden/uncertain identity, clearly. The haunting love interest complicated by teleporters in MICHAELMAS (with maybe a tad of this in ROGUE MOON, iirc?) also links to Jonas. (The mysterious aliens who think the whole thing is just a parlor trick and experience time-flow at a different rate than Earth seems like a solid starting

point for the denizens of Yesod.)

And not the least, Jonas is the middle name of Budrys, the "J" of "A.J."

=mantis=

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