

Jungle Garden revisited

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 07 May 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3979>

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LJ Janowski — 07 May 2003, 04:19

Hello, I'm LJ and I'm new to the Urth list. While the Jungle Garden discussion seems to have died down, I would like to add a little nevertheless, particularly in response to the Library/Garden comparison in Nutria's post of April 21. The Bible/Eden : Library/Botanic Garden idea struck me as very interesting, and I would like to add some thoughts on the Eden side.

Nutria wrote:

The fact that the Garden contains missionaries and also is a place of death is Edenic, broadly speaking. IIRC, the avern is a "delight to the eyes" but brings death. Only the Conciliator can wield it with full profit. Mere Adams are advised to stay away from it. And of course, it comes from the heavens. Those who are trapped in the Garden are those who fantasize about the past, and don't want to live in the real world (?). A return to Eden is a trap; "salvation" lies only in the future, after judgment. Probably a look at Talos's "Eschatology and Genesis" would provide more indications. Just some thoughts.

While I found Nutria's Eden/Botanic Gardens parallel to be an interesting suggestion, I would submit that Nutria's suggestion to look at Talos' Eschatology and Genesis (EaG) is helpful but tends to lead me away from a direct interpretation of the Botanic Gardens as an Eden parallel. The play takes the gardens of the House Absolute as its "Eden". The manicured nature of the House Gardens indicates that they are designed along the lines of a recreational garden, which seems close to the paradise as garden of delights idea. This in mind, it is easy to forgive the newly born Meschia and Meschiane of EaG when they assume that the Autarch, ultimate master of the House's Gardens, to be their God/Pancreator. Both the reader and EaG's spectators know that the garden was tailored for the dwellers of the House, but Meschia and Meschiane can remain blissfully unaware of the fact, lending a ironic twist to the Eden parallel.

By contrast, the Botanic Gardens are an example of nature hostile to man. Despite their name, which would suggest a sedate collection of various specimens, the "Botanic Gardens" appear to be wild terrain, partitioned from the flow of time and linked to a particular place by Inire's ingenuity. Unlike those above the House Absolute, these "Gardens" pose very real dangers to those who choose to enter. (There are dangers in trespassing near the House, but those come from the House's guardians, which offers another Eden parallel.) Examples of the dangers of the Botanic Gardens include a drowning pool, lethal flowers, and several individuals who seem to have permanently lost their way. While the Gardens were partitioned by Inire's conscious action, they are essentially savage and inhospitable within.

If the House's gardens function as an Eden, what are the Botanic Gardens? The Botanic Gardens seem to function as a species of anti-Eden fit for a dying Urth--an opposite to the new Eden that EaG suggests that might herald the coming of Ushas. They function as a place of death and descent into confusion where the aware becomes the unaware. By contrast, the House Absolute is, as the home of the autarch (and Severian specifically) and thus associated with the potential for enlightenment and the origin of a new creation.

I think this reading also fits Nutria's idea of the avern as tree of life parallel rather well. In a parody of Eden we would expect a tree of death, which the avern clearly is. Also, the whole idea of an anti-Eden provides a nice resonance with the zoanthropes, who have abandoned the pain of humanity for a return to a bestial state, and other examples of loss of humanity in BOTNS. This idea of Eden parody also fits Nutria's insightful suggestion that such reversion is "a trap", in the case of the Botanic gardens very literally!

Just a few thoughts,
LJ

*----- Date: Mon, 21 Apr 2003 09:41:12 -0500 From:
James Jordan Subject: Re: (urth) Jungle Garden

Tom wrote:

Could [the Garden] be a dual to the Library? Another place where people go and some never come back. Both places have hazy boundaries. Both places have old men who look for things. Severian goes to both places on an errand: one for books, another for an avern. Both recipients end up dead.

I suspect so. Compare the Bible with the Garden of Eden as "deep sources" for the pair. The Library undergirds (literally) the Commonwealth civilization. The Garden is also underground. Both are broad images of foundations and origins, relating to the past. The fact that the Garden contains missionaries and also is a place of death is Edenic, broadly speaking.

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Those who are trapped in the Garden are those who fantasize about the past, and don't want to live in the real world (?). A return to Eden is a trap; "salvation" lies only in the future, after judgment.

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Nutria