

TBOTNS, Sev's last line

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 10 Jul 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4082>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 10 Jul 2003, 14:24

Matthew wrote:

Severian states that he sent one copy of the manuscript to the library at the citadel and will cast the second - the copy we are reading - into the void.

Wouldn't a conscious effort at propaganda require a rather more active effort at publication and dissemination? Without that I can't see Severian having contemporary politic motives as being credible. A concern for history - one that rulers often have - looks more plausible.

Right. I wasn't saying that I agreed with Clute's examination of The Book as a political document, I was just saying that he had published that more than 12 years ago. FWIW.

But yes, the fact there are only two copies works against The Book as propaganda and returns it to the scale of confession, apology, and/or private autobiography.

The notes I gave about the wait for the New Sun also suggest The Book cannot be intended for the masses. (Then again, perhaps it isn't =mass= propaganda that is implied? What if it were just some kind of "elite" propaganda? Hmmm. So Father Inire . . . and Cybe and Racho . . . are the only ones whose opinions matter? <g>) To further that, I should remind us all of Severian's last line in TBOTNS:

"To this account, I, Severian the Lame, Autarch, do set my hand in what shall be called the last year of the old sun."

Thus he does not think it will take a year to bring the White Fountain; so where is the time for the text to get out to the people?

OTOH, maybe we are looking at this propaganda angle from the wrong end (I should re-read the Clute, myself!). It is perhaps not so much a pre-New Sun propaganda (with a "use before deluge" stamp) as a post-New Sun propaganda ("use only after deluge"): an explanation as to why so much destruction was required to bring the New Sun, to a presumed target audience of otherwise happy citizens of the New Sun Commonwealth (clearly Severian not realizing that the destruction would be near total, sweeping his civilization away completely).

Which is pretty close to what you say about a ruler's concern for history, just a bit more immediate.

=mantis=

Chris — 10 Jul 2003, 19:31 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

I agree with pretty much all of the comments about The Book as a political document, there are a large number of independent factors that all work against The Book being effective in this

way.

Mantis' comments lead me to think that it may be even more important to find an answer to another, related question: what were Severian's expectations, should he succeed? I have commented before that up until a certain point in UotNS Severian seems downright naive about the potential destruction when the New Sun comes. Or, if he knew about the destruction, then at the very least he was naive about how people were going to react to it. This seems particularly difficult to reconcile, given that Talos' play gave him all the foreshadowing he could possibly need - if he actually gave any thought to it.

The first major possibility is that he knew, and for whatever reason chose to gloss over this aspect in his account of his expectations. Without attempting to guess his motive for such a move, there are a couple of difficulties that need to be resolved (and might point the way to his motive). The first is that his projected readers (for the copy in the Library - the copy that he tossed into the void is another matter) are mostly people who will have already experienced the coming of the New Sun. They will know full well what happened when the New Sun came, the only thing they might be deceived about is whether Severian expected it. The second is, did he expect the Library to survive the Deluge and be accessible to people under the New Sun? [Side question: **Did** it survive, and **was** it accessible? I can only make a philosophical answer, which is no better than a guess unless you happen to agree with my philosophical interpretation].

The second possibility is that he knew, and that he assumed everyone else would know, and that everyone would agree to the necessity of these consequences without qualms or any need to justify them. Being a torturer he makes some odd assumptions about human nature sometimes. This avoids one of the difficulties above, but still makes one wonder what good it does to put the book in the Library when civilization is going to be destroyed. This is perhaps the least problematic explanation, but seems weak to me; even if he assumed everyone would see it his way, it would still seem to be worth a mention.

The last possibility I can think of is that he simply didn't know. Severian is a good critical thinker, but emotionally immature in some ways. He seems prone to a certain amount of "wishful thinking" where he simply chooses not to accept or examine certain things. His cherished coin from Vodalus and the supposed letter from Thecla, or his dealings with Agia in general might be examples of this.

In this I've repeated some points that Mantis and others have already brought up, in the interest of keeping some kind of structure to the conversation. In a nutshell, I believe that the choices you make in answering **this** question have a direct bearing on how you interpret the supposed purpose of the book, precluding certain interpretations and opening up others.

Civet

Matthew wrote:

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