

Severian & Christ, Wolfe &

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 12 Mar 1998

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Tony Ellis — 12 Mar 1998, 15:10

12/03/98

11:44

Severian & Christ, Wolfe & Yeats

Peter Stephenson wrote:

Even if this isn't what happens in this particular episode, it's certainly striking how quickly Severian `falls off' in any episode where he is somehow fleetingly put up against Christ... In the first example I hazarded, which looked a bit like Christ before Pilate, the chapter ends with Severian demonstrating his torturing skills on one of the soldiers (at the lochage's suggestion, it should be said).

There -are- parallels between this scene and Christ before Pilate, but I feel it's too lightweight for the significance you're giving it. When Christ appeared before Pilate he was in deep shit: he had been denounced by the religious authorities, flogged, and was now effectively on trial for his life. Pilate asks him "what is Truth?". Theologically speaking, it's a pretty pivotal scene. Severian, on the other hand, has merely been called in for a little chat because the Lochage is concerned that his dramatic appearance may cause public alarm.

...In the last, he ends up by killing Typhon/Piaton

I think if you want to look for examples of Severian being "put up against Christ" you're on firmer ground with Severian before Typhon, certainly. And how about the scenes in UOTNS where he is beaten and denounced for performing miracles? I think he compares quite favorably to the big J.C. on all these occasions.

Re: Connections between Wolfe and Yeats

Anyway, that's what's occurred to me. i) Clutching at straws;
ii) Interesting parallels; iii) something more?

Interesting parallels, certainly ...Although cyclical time, antithetical "masks" etc are such big, abstract themes that it's inevitable that they pop up again and again in different forms.

Yeat's world-view (as represented by his gyres and masks) was very dualistic, and I would say that there we have a crucial difference between him and Wolfe. Wolfe's Urth universe is ultimately Unary: there is really only one side, and everyone is on it - they just don't all realise it. <g>

Peter Stephenson — 13 Mar 1998, 09:37 · follows Tony Ellis

Tony Ellis wrote:

There -are- parallels between this scene and Christ before Pilate, but I feel it's too lightweight for the significance you're giving it.

There are certainly no major thematic links, I didn't want to imply a deep relationship.

Yeats's world-view (as represented by his gyres and masks) was very dualistic, and I would say that there we have a crucial difference between him and Wolfe. Wolfe's Urth universe is ultimately Unary: there is really only one side, and everyone is on it - they just don't all realise it. <g>

Certainly there are differences of this kind. I would say, though, that when looking for particular themes this isn't going to worry the reader --- even the careful reader --- too much of the time (which really amounts to your last remark). In Yeats the oppositions tend mostly to be night/day, male/female, living/dead and so on. In Wolfe there are also such complexities: dying sun and white fountain, cold and warm futures, death and resurrection; I would tentatively say, perhaps even a stronger sense of good and evil. You don't often find the directness of Severian vs. Typhon or Agia in Yeats, as regards ordinary humans at any rate --- but I suppose that's in the nature of lyric poetry.

Peter