

A Slow-Moving, Half-Living, Smiling, Pale-Limbed "Statue"?

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 17 Nov 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4930>

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E — 17 Nov 2007, 08:51

Hello,

In Urth of the New Sun Ch 41 "Severian from His Cenotaph", he says the following:

"An antlered buck... to my right... On my left, a statue stared with sightless eyes."

Then a few paragraphs later, after analyzing his epitath/monument:

"...and my absurd memorial stood where at another time I had feigned to think the giant Nod a statue. Recalling the moment, I glanced at the one I had seen upon stepping back into Briah, and found it was, just as I had supposed, one of those harmless half-living creatures. It was moving slowly toward me now, its lips curved in an archaic smile. For a breath I admired the play of my own light on its pale limbs, but it seemed to me it had been only two watches or three since daylight had come to the slopes... and the vitality I felt now put me in no mood to contemplate statues..."

From the above, to me at least, it seems Severian is applying the terms "half-living", "smiling", "slow moving", etc., to the statue to his left, the one with sightless eyes. Are these terms implying the statue is some sort of bio-engineered type monument, and not of stone?

His description almost makes it seem zombie-like, like a partially-animated corpse (paleness, slow-moving, smiling but seemingly non-sentient, etc.). It must not be sentient, because if it were, he would probably have spoken to it; were it dangerous or threatening, he would have noted that as well.

Any conjectures would be great. Now that I think about it, the "zombie-statue" idea seems too extreme; if I had to guess right now I would say it's a hologram of some sort, a projection... and Severian doesn't say this explicitly because he assumes we know about his world and know that statues on Urth aren't necessarily made of stone.

[Maybe this is related to the hologram/projection of himself that he sees much earlier in UOTNS when the "jibbers" on The Ship want him to salute his own hologram, which itself is stuck in a pattern of walking 3 steps and then saluting... but in this case he explicitly says he sees an image of himself being repeated, and doesn't call it a 'statue' at all... so maybe it is not related.]

Best

-Adam

Pedro Pereira — 18 Nov 2007, 13:47 · in reply to E

Hi, Adam.

I don't remember the books all that well, but I think that "statue" is exactly the same type of statues that Severian finds in BotNS when he gets near the House Absolute for the first time. I don't remember very well as I said, but my impression is that they are some kind of "robot" or bioengineered beings. I think it was clear in BotNS.

Sorry I can't be of more help. By the way, this is my first post here. :)

Pedro

Jeff Wilson — 18 Nov 2007, 23:04 · in reply to Pedro Pereira

Pedro Pereira wrote:

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Pedro

Welcome to the monkey house, Pedro.

Bionics (in the literal meaning of "mimicing life") seem to be fairly common in Severian's era, thus the confusion over Jonas' true nature, the description of construction mechas as "giants" in the mountains around Typhon's tomb, and the particular attention paid to stationary statuary like the Eponyms and the allegedly mineralized bodies excavated at Saltus. This may be because conventional moving machinery would be much less likely to survive from the eras of its creation, while some bionics would seem to share the ability of living things to heal damage and wear, and so "half-living" machines tend to become a larger proportion of those surviving to be observed by him in the time of the Autarchs.

Jeff

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