The Ninth Configuration Short Guide

The Ninth Configuration by William Peter Blatty

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Characters

The central character is of course Kane: The book begins with his arrival at Camp 18 and ends (except for the final chapter) with his passing. He is introduced to the inmates as a psychiatrist, Colonel Hudson Stephen Kane, "Coming to find out if you're really psycho!" Physically compelling but with sadness in his eyes, Kane hides a secret that comes out, in some detail, close to the end of the book. Kane is actually not a bad psychiatrist, in one scene taking a dangerous hammer away from a mental patient by a combination of physical strength and a clever appeal to the man's delusional idea complex. He certainly is the epitome of caring, his office door open at all times, despite his exhaustion and worsening headaches.

Against Kane is played Captain Billy Thomas Cutshaw, the astronaut who is in Camp 18 for a launchpad refusal to go to the moon, and leader of the motley crew that inhabit the American castle. Adversarial from the start, he taunts Kane, and he is the inmate most likely to be feigning madness, despite his talk of hearing "voices." Towards the end of The Ninth Configuration, Cutshaw admits that he refused to go to the moon because he was afraid. Kane's self-sacrifice inspires him and gives him courage; Blatty leaves the decision unresolved (unlike the final paragraph of Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane), but likely Cutshaw will resume his career. Given the mythic impact of the astronaut as folk hero in the late 1960s, Cutshaw's character is a bold departure.

For a relatively short novel, The Ninth Configuration abounds in second-rank and minor characters, all vivid and quirky. Dr.

Fell—presumably named for Thomas Brown's late seventeenth-century epigram, "I do not love thee, Dr. Fell"—is almost a third major character, with his own secret. Fell originally seems as crazy as the inmates, drunken and overly concerned with his trousers, whose bizarre office decor includes a skull decanter for his Scotch. Later, his mysterious absences are explained, and he is revealed as much more in touch and in control than one had supposed. Another secondary character is Sergeant Groper, a harsh soldier with "a face that was pummeled beef adorned with a crew cut," and with a willingness to play along with Kane's unorthodox approach and, ultimately, a genuine concern for others.

Minor characters fall into four categories: the mental patients, the Marines guarding them, characters associated with Kane's past, and those in a biker bar at the novel's end. The first are colorful, including Captain Leslie Morris Fairbanks, who carries a sword and wears earrings, and cuts an "F" in the seat of Dr. Fell's trousers; Reno, who puts on Shakespeare's plays with dogs playing all parts; Price, who imagines he is on Venus or Mars; Nammack, who has Superman delusions, including wearing the cape; and Lieutenant Fromme, who masquerades as Dr. Fell in the first scene and wants help with his secret desire—Kane, of course, expects his goal to be medical school—to play the violin. Though primarily presented humorously, the inmates at Camp 18 are real enough that their various fates, summarized in the book's final chapters, are genuinely moving.

The soldiers at Camp 18, other than Groper, are very minor, with only Sergeants Christian and Krebs named. When he arrives as a new inmate, Lieutenant Gilman remembers Kane from Vietnam, uncovering Kane's true identity and providing a harrowing flashback, in which a Captain Robinson also appears. The bikers and others appear only at the end, leading some critics to find them gratuitous, in both book and movie. Because they feature in one scene, Blatty does his best to develop their characters quickly, but this cannot compare to the depth and quirkiness of the characters present throughout the book. However, the bikers' violence and sexuality are essential to the plot, and the more one knows of actual motorcycle gangs, the less incredible their characters are.

Social Concerns

As a rewrite of William Peter Blatty's 1967 novel, Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane, The Ninth Configuration presents an unusual combination of sociopolitical and religious themes that reflect the cultures of two decades. Although a Kirkus reviewer commented that Blatty's material that was "fresh ten years ago" had become "dry and stale," the two themes characteristic of the 1960s hardly became irrelevant at decade's end: the insanity of war and the military and the question of who decides what constitutes "sanity" and "insanity." These themes did flower in the 1960s, both in novels and in nonfiction, from underground papers and manifestos against the war in Vietnam, to the antipsychiatry of Thomas Szasz or R. D. Laing. However, motion pictures exploring the craziness of war were more common in the 1970s and 1980s, whether darkly humorous—including M*A*S*H (1970) and the film version of Catch-22 (Joseph Heller, 1970; see separate entry)—or thoroughly grim, such as Francis Ford Coppola's Apocalypse Now (1979) or Stanley Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket (1987).

Literary and social critics continued to examine the cultural construction of insanity in the 1970s and 1980s, including work based on the theories of Michel Foucault and, later, feminist analysis of women and mental illness.

In The Ninth Configuration, Blatty combines the two themes. The novel takes place in an isolated mock castle on America's West coast, given to the military and used as a mental hospital for officers— primarily Vietnam soldiers, but also an astronaut who refused a moon mission from the launching pad. No one knows if the astronaut, Cutshaw, and the others are faking; one purpose of Project Freud is to either cure them or expose them as malingerers. Camp 18 is the sole remainder of "a secret network of military rest camps where the men were hidden from the public and studied."

The antimilitary message, more central in Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane, is still strong in the later novel. The United States government not only engages in a crazy war—so horrible that it either drives men mad or makes incarceration in a mental institution preferable—but covers up the results and uses the soldiers as mental lab rats. Moreover, the protagonist, who comes to Camp 18 as a psychiatrist, has a hidden military past which is even worse than the inmates', driving him to a fugue state still laced with bad dreams and guilt. "If we could scrub away the blood," he says before entering the new identity, "do you think we could find where we've hidden our souls?" The inmates and Kane are all "highly intelligent" and witty, increasing our sympathy for them and our indignation at their treatment by the government. Part of the triumph at the end is that the inmates are not only cured, but protected from future service in combat.

However, Blatty's approach implicates more than the military, implicitly asking the antipsychiatry question of whether insanity might be the only sane response to an insane world. While Laing and Szasz see this more as a matter of culture and interpersonal double-binds, Blatty's novel expands the question to man's inherent nature, connecting it to the religious themes in the book. The protagonist, Kane,

wonders if we are not all "fish out of water," feeling insane just for "being born into this place," because "we were programmed" for "someplace . . .

else." Thus, it is not the disempowered or socially marginalized who are stigmatized as insane, but rather those most in touch with our basic nature and the metaphysical "somewhere else" of which our souls are aware. Still, the challenge to the concept of "mental illness" probably depends on earlier, more socially based works.

Religiously, The Ninth Configuration fits perfectly between the reaffirmation of traditional religion in The Exorcist (1971; see separate entry) and the original and syncretistic New Age philosophy of that book's sequel, Legion (1983; see separate entry). Kane and his friend/adversary Cutshaw struggle over issues such as the problem of pain, man's purpose, and the existence of good and self-sacrifice. Cutshaw accompanies Kane, a Catholic, to church; but they also argue whether entropy is evidence for or against God and eternal life. The novel's title is a reference to the number of transmutations of molecules needed to create life—even one configuration coming about, Kane feels, is "more fantastic than simply believing in God." The Ninth Configuration offers neither a whole (and holistic) theory such as in Legion, nor a plot that shows the efficacy of the church, such as in The Exorcist, but offers questions and answers on a more personal level. Moreover, The Ninth Configuration presents more debate than The Exorcist and more resolution purely through the plot than Legion.

Clearly a product of both the 1960s and the 1970s, The Ninth Configuration combines an antimilitary stance with questions concerning madness and religion—and whether religion, or at least faith and humanity, can cure insanity.

While these issues become more popular at some times than others, they are universal. Blatty's treatment of them is influenced by the cultural contexts, but it is also clear that these are themes of intense and long-lasting personal concern to him.

Techniques

To the extent that The Ninth Configuration has a driving plot, it is a mystery: clues build up that the new psychiatrist, Hudson Kane, may not be who or what he says he is. Some of the evidence is intriguingly unreliable, since it is being assembled by mental patients, or by staff such as Dr. Fell or Sergeant Groper, who sometimes seem as crazy as their charges.

Brief memories and longer dreams by Kane provide other hints, more likely true but more baffling. Fell disappears without explanations, heightening the dramatic questions. This mystery aspect is structured simply and melodramatically, with most (although not all) clues at the ends of chapters. Towards the end of the book, a new inmate recognizes Kane as someone else, and Kane's old identity unravels.

Above all, however, The Ninth Configuration is a remarkably funny book, worth reading for the dialogue and absurd actions of inmates and keepers alike. Winters quotes Blatty as saying that writing comedy is "exhilarating," while other writing is "labor," and that after Legion he intended to write pure "entertainment."

Blatty's comedic pacing is excellent, his phrasing witty (including a selective use of alliteration), and his sense of humor self-indulgent but worth indulging. Real and feigned madness provide comedic motifs, including inmate Price's delusions of being on Venus, or Cutshaw's notion that God is a giant Foot. The socially inappropriate behavior, such as singing "Let Me Entertain You" in line during morning formation, or Cutshaw's desire to go to the beach on a rainy night, is often developed into highly amusing scenes.

Another source of humor is the mental patients' pseudo-reasoning. When Cutshaw attempts to climb the walls and fails, he complains, "Fairbanks is right.

Something is wrong with these walls."

Blatty also plays with logical riddles and conundrums, such as Cutshaw's version of Zeno's paradox, "How many times can a person break a shish kebab skewer in half?" or the self-contradictory statement, "I am an incorrigible liar."

Self-conscious irony also provides humor, as when Cutshaw urges another inmate to kiss the hem of his garment, but not get proud that he received this favor, because "there's nothing worse than hubris."

The Ninth Configuration abounds with a satisfying array of references, often humorously mixing high and low culture, politics and ephemera. "Where's my Ho Chi Minh decoder ring?" one mental patient asks. Cutshaw says to Kane in Kane's dream, "If you dream, don't drive." Blatty uses references to or quotations from writings from the Bible to Simon and Garfunkel's song "Mrs. Robinson," including Shakespeare, Henry James, and Oscar Wilde; motion pictures such as Beau Geste, Citizen Kane, and A Man for All Seasons; and Teilhard de Chardin, the partial inspiration for Father Merrin in The

Exorcist and the philosophy in Legion. In the first scene, Cutshaw shouts, "Robert Browning had the clap and he caught it from Charlotte and Emily Bronte." Inmates sometimes have names characteristic of their delusions, taken from high or low culture, such as Captain Leslie Fairbanks, a swashbuckler, or Michelangelo Gomez, who may be or may imagine himself to be a painter.

Some critics find The Ninth Configuration tiresome rather than amusing, and the style of humor is more characteristic of 1967 than of 1978. Douglas Winter points out the book's "uneasy fusion of comedy and polemic." At its best, however, the comedy and thematics work well together in a way characteristic of good black humor.

Themes

Besides being antimilitary and asking how madness is defined, the novel explores the problematic nature of identity—in keeping with both the 1960s "identity crises" and the later spread of psychotherapy and self-help books. Literally, the whole plot depends on an identity confusion, hinted at in mysterylike fashion throughout the book, and a deliberate masquerade, revealed more suddenly towards the end. The first scene features an inmate presenting himself as Dr. Fell, the in-house physician, complete with stolen clothing. Moreover, role playing, if not actually switching identities, shows up in Shakespearean drama put on by a mental patient, Reno (with dogs as actors), and in Kane's decision to let the inmates act out the movie The Great Escape, "for therapeutic reasons," even ordering the Marines running Camp 18 to dress as Nazis.

Blatty also plays with names and naming throughout the book. Whether jokingly or through insanity, Cutshaw, the rest of the inmates, and Dr. Fell use other names for Kane so cavalierly that they make the whole concept of identity seem slippery. The names often have symbolic associations, or may just show the disjointed thought of the inmates: P. T. Barnum, Giant Brain, Gregory Peck, and Caribou. Cutshaw's name also slides around, the astronaut being called or calling himself names from Big X to Rumpelstiltskin. Fell's first comment to Kane mixes true insight and absurdity: after calling Kane Vincent (a clue to the protagonist's true identity), he mock-explains that Kane looks like Vincent Van Gogh, "or a lark in a wheat field; I'm not sure which." This theme, played out literally via possession in Blatty's supernatural books, is here both more subtle and basic.

Related to the question of self identity, Blatty offers a fascinating and unusual view of mental illness. Discussing Hamlet, Reno chooses neither traditional interpretation of the character, that Hamlet is insane or that he is pretending. Rather, Reno's theory is that Hamlet is pretending to be crazy so that he does not really go crazy, "and the crazier he acts, the healthier he gets." Acting crazy is a "safety valve" such as Kane suggests that the acting out of The Great Escape may be for his charges, or their imitation madness (if it is imitation) probably is; Kane himself, through most of the book, is engaged in a similar kind of "acting," identity-displacement as a safety valve from truly going insane.

Although The Ninth Configuration contains no supernatural elements, Douglas Winter suggests that it forms a trilogy with Blatty's possession novels, based on the similar themes: "The Exorcist posed the problem of evil; The Ninth Configuration countered by posing a greater mystery, the problem of good; and Legion offered Blatty's solution." The distinctions are not that absolute, if only because Blatty cannot (perhaps no one can) discuss evil or good without considering the other. Still, Winter captures the major emphasis of each book. The movement of The Ninth Configuration is, even more strongly than in the other two novels, from lost questioning to hope. Cutshaw wears a black armband, "mourning the death of God," and badgers Kane for proof of divine help or human good; in his own way, Kane delivers.

Self-sacrifice is featured in all three of these books. Although it is a minor theme in Legion and is strengthened in the film adaptation of The Exorcist III, it forms the core of The Ninth Configuration.

In one debate, Cutshaw challenges Kane to give him just one example of a person sacrificing himself to save another. By novel's end, Blatty has delivered two examples: Kane, who gives up much to save Cutshaw from hostile bikers (in a bar the astronaut has fled to) and then more to heal him and the other inmates; and Sergeant Groper, a hard-bitten combat soldier from whom the sacrifice, revealed in an epiloguelike final chapter, is unexpected and perhaps even more meaningful. Kane, to whom Cutshaw refers in a late chapter as "a lamb," is also (the subject of the sermon when Kane and Cutshaw attend church) "the Good Shepherd who was willing to 'lay down his life for his sheep.'" The motivation is clear when Kane yells at someone, "Jesus Christ, man! Why don't you love somebody a little? Why don't you help somebody a little?"

Adaptations

The Ninth Configuration was filmed, with Blatty both scripting and directing, and released in 1981 to generally negative reviews. Many critics found the dialogue (and monologues) too arch, the bikerbar scene too violent and unbelievable, and the two together a mismatch worse than either alone. Most praised was the cinematography, especially atmospheric shots of the castie (said to be in the United States Pacific Northwest but filmed in Germany), constantly in rain, fog, or dusk until the final scene.

Those who already like the book, however, will probably like the understandably similar movie, featuring the same basic plot and characters, and many of the same shticks, events, and speeches.

(Since the novel is relatively short, less had to be cut than with other adaptations of books into feature films.) Stacy Keach and Scott Wilson play off each other well as Kane and Cutshaw, respectively; Jason Miller (Father Karras in The Exorcist) shows a nice range, all exaggerated, as Reno, and Neville Brand is definitely overplayed as Groper, but enjoyably hard-bitten. Perhaps the best acting is by Ed Flanders as Dr. Fell, who has the same secret identity as in the book.

Despite the greater opportunities to explain in a novel, the motion picture version of The Ninth Configuration is often clearer than the book. A voice-over by Dr. Fell explains the origins of Camp 18 early in the film; Kane's dark past is signaled by whispered voice-overs (hints coming earlier in the movie than in the book) about the Vietnam boy: "I cut his head off and he kept on talking"; "He was only a boy"; "Colonel, what are you holding?" Since many vital explanations or thematic passages are dialogue in the book anyway—Reno's theory of Hamlet's madness, Kane's arguments for God, Dr.

Fell's explaining Kane's secret to Groper, and others—these could be used intact.

The motion picture also employs visuals well. Some critics feel the shots of the castle's eerie decorations, especially gargoyles, are overdone; but the contrast between the setting and the inmates' activities can be lost in the novel (although it is more often mentioned in Twinkle, Twinkle, 'Tiller" Kane), while it forms a constant source of irony in the motion picture. The motion picture also benefits from atmospheric scenes of raining and water, contrasted to one sunny moment—opening with a shot of bright flowers—when Cutshaw is released from Camp 18 at the end of the movie.

The scene under the opening credits is also striking, conveying the cold impersonal distance of the stars and thus augmenting our understanding as Cutshaw aborts his moon launch.

The few changes or additions from book to motion picture are improvements, as if Blatty still continued to work over the story. One subtle introduction is a pack of wild, hostile bikers (some, oddly, in a truck) passing Kane's car as he arrives at the castle. Not enough to make the ending in the biker-bar seem fully prepared for, it offers a reward for

second-time watching. Instead of Kane happening to arrive at the right bar at the right time to save Cutshaw, a harassed waitress escapes in the uproar and phones the asylum, where Kane answers.

Fell explains Kane's need to save the other inmates to save himself, but worries that there may not be enough improvement soon enough, thereby making Kane's self-sacrifice for "shock treatment" a bit more credible. Kane's end is also altered very slightly, making it still a choice, but more a result of the brawl with the bikers.

Perhaps the most interesting change ends the movie. In both book and movie, Cutshaw asks Kane, "If you die first, and there's life after death, will you give me a sign?" In the book, there is no sign, unless it is the healing of the inmates after Kane's self-sacrifice. In the movie, there is a follow-up: Cutshaw, leaving the asylum, inexplicably finds in his pocket the St. Christopher medal of his that was last seen with Kane. The credits roll over a still of Cutshaw's face, ecstatic.

Key Questions

Discussion groups could take a number of approaches to The Ninth Configuration, examining its themes and techniques in the book alone, or studying the book in various contexts. Obviously, reading both Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane, and The Ninth Configuration, with careful comparison, will teach much about not only the two books but also Blatty's priorities and techniques as a writer, and about writing in general. Reading The Ninth Configuration in conjunction with one of its predeces sors, such as One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest or Catch-22, could illuminate both literary and social issues. And of course, even more comparisons and contrasts than could be presented here will be apparent if one does read The Exorcist, The Ninth Configuration, and Legion as a trilogy, as Douglas Winter suggests.

On the other hand, groups could study The Ninth Configuration alone, as a book, or movie, or both. Within the novel, attention could be paid to Blatty's techniques of humor, the way he hints at Kane's secret identity (and some of the ironies along the way), his use of an atmospheric (and self-enclosed) setting, and his development of quirky yet primarily human characters. Social and religious themes, as outlined above, would be grounds for even more discussion.

1. What was your reaction to Kane's self-sacrifice? Were his reasons clear and credible? Did you find the effects credible?

2. Would you consider The Ninth Configuration to be a Christian book (depending on how you define that term)? Why or why not?

3. Do you think Kane is forced into his self-sacrifice, or does he have a choice? Is this different in the film and in the book?

4. Does Blatty's humor in The Ninth Configuration work for you? Why or why not?

5. In what ways is The Ninth Configuration, published in 1978, still characteristic of the 1960s, showing its roots in Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane?

6. Does the novel glamorize insanity?

Here the group may wish to consider trends in psychology, from the antipsychiatry of the 1960s and 1970s to the more chemical models for mental illness in the 1980s and 1990s, or also read One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and Breakfast of Champions (Kurt Vonnegut, 1973; see separate entry), contrasting them as well.

7. Is the lack of any female characters (except in the biker scene) a problem?

Could the roles of any characters, especially Kane, be described as "feminized," or not?

8. Which seems to present the most consistent, convincing metaphysical statement: The Exorcist, The Ninth Configuration, or Legion?

9. Did Blatty allow sufficient clues regarding Kane's secret, so that its uncovering seemed fair? Was that mystery involving enough to keep you reading the book?

10. How did the setting in the fauxcastle add to the atmosphere, both of the movie and of the book?

Literary Precedents

Critic Douglas Winter rightly compares The Ninth Configuration to both Joseph Heller's Catch-22 (book, 1961; motion picture, 1970) and Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (book, 1962; motion picture, 1975; see separate entries) as classic texts of social, military and civilian madness. Cutshaw— as well as, in some ways, Kane— is as absurdly helpless as Catch-22's Yossarian or McMurphy, the protesting rebel of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest's. Most importantly, both books would have shown Blatty some ways to combine the humorous, ranging from very dark to at times madcap, with the serious. Blatty's novel and Kesey's even share a theme of self-realization and self-sacrifice, although Blatty's religious concerns are very far from Kesey's approach.

Each of these novels influenced a line of descendants, both written and, perhaps more influential to Blatty, filmed.

Catch-22's heirs certainly include M*A*S*H: A Novel About Three Army Doctors (1968) and M*A*S*H Goes To Maine (1972), by Richard Hooker (a pseudonym for Richard Hornberger)— and the highly popular motion picture (1970) and television show. One less known but amusing novel in that tradition is Hanging On by Dean R. Koontz (1973). In turn, the humorous antiwar novel goes back at least to The Good Soldier Svejk stories, by jaroslav Hasek (19111923).

The King of Hearts (1966) is a French motion picture with significant similarities to The Ninth Configuration, including an antiwar message (in this case, the setting is World War I) and inmates of a mental asylum who are released to run the town; they do not seem to do it badly, certainly posing no threat comparable to the war, which leads the audience to question social categories of "sane" and "insane."

Blatty may have been influenced by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s funny anti-war tale of possible madness, Slaughterhouse Five (book, 1970; motion picture, 1972).

Other black-humor treatments of mental illness include John Barth's novels The Floating Opera (1956; see separate entry) and Lost in the Funhouse (1968). Conversely, The Ninth Configuration contrasts strongly to Kurt Vonnegut's novel Breakfast of Champions (1973; see separate entry), a forerunner of the chemical approach to mental illness that dominated the 1980s and 1990s. In The Ninth Configuration, Blatty explicitly nods to Hitchcock's motion picture Spellbound (1945), when Cutshaw decides Kane has a secret and calls him Gregory Peck; finally, Kane is both Peck's character and Ingrid Bergman's, the amnesiac suffering disturbingly violent dreams and the healer.

Another precedent is Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking Glass (1872), with their use of faux-reasoning, puzzles, and seemingly reasonable absurdity. Cutshaw wants Kane to sign a blank confession, explaining, "we'll fill it in later," echoing the Queen of Heart's, "sentence first, verdict afterwards." The situation is also Kafkaesque, but the tone is more Lewis Carroll than Franz Kafka. Blatty does invite us to draw comparisons to Shakespeare, not only specifically regarding

madness, but also in the consideration of suicide and the afterlife, as in Hamlet's famous soliloquy.

Related Titles

Of course, the primary precursor of The Ninth Configuration is Blatty's own Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane. While The Ninth Configuration is a tighter book than Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane, with a better mystery setup and a stronger thematic focus, they share basic concerns, characters, and themes. The earlier book is in some ways funnier, with even more pop culture play (a dog dropping on a bed is labeled "Brand X") and even more zaniness by the inmates. Moreover, many subplots were trimmed in the rewrite, ranging from minor—a very funny revolt by a computer, presaging the computer error that sends Kane off as a psychiatrist—to more major.

One major subplot concerns The Consuelo Endicott College for Girls, next door to the castle housing the military mental cases; characters from the college, including Miss Mawr, Clydene Sloop, and the Founder, provide further color (although ostensibly sane, they are as offbeat as the inmates) and love interests.

Also, consonant with a more major antimilitary theme, scenes in the Pentagon and elsewhere show decision making, especially based on the need to get Cutshaw back in space, by Senator Nolan D. Hesbaugh (his quirky wife appears briefly), General George M. Lastrade, and Brigadier General Sheridan Syntax. As shown by those, the earlier book abounds in funny-sounding names; Price in The Ninth Configuration, for instance, is Sergeant Dorian Zook in Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane, and dog-loving Reno was previously Captain Spoor.

One of the biggest differences marks the climax of the novels. Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane ends with the same act of self-sacrifice as The Ninth Configuration, but it is less credibly motivated; despite critics finding fault with the later novel (and motion picture) due to the biker scene, not present in Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane, that scene strongly buttresses Kane's motives and prepares the readers for his final actions.

Reading The Exorcist, The Ninth Configuration, and Legion as a trilogy, as Winter suggests, one does see many similar themes, especially concerning religious issues. Many of the same questions are posed, although philosophically they are answered in different ways. The difference between the somber, even grim tone of The Exorcist and the humor, no matter how dark, of The Ninth Configuration may obscure many similarities, although in Legion, Kinderman's dialogue and the plot do provide some blend of both approaches.

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