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The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 04 Sep 1998

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Jon Camfield — 04 Sep 1998, 09:49

Tony Ellis wrote:

The relevant quote is in the final chapter of Urth (Chapter LI), where Severian is chatting with his priest. He remembers the young officer reporting that Hierodules had landed a man and woman on the grounds of the House Absolute: "Remembering that, it was simple enough to guess who my priest's forbears had been - the sailors routed by my memories had paid for their defeat with their pasts, just as I would have lost the future of my descendants had my own past been defeated."

"my descendants" seems pretty unequivocal here.

I had always taken this to show Sev believed that the sailors (Gunnie, etc.) were the Adams and Eves of Ushas, though looking again, hm.

Another one of Wolfe's highly compacted sentences--

The part of the sentence up to the dash lead the reader to expect the next part to reveal the ID of the Adam and Eve pair.

But the second half.... It seems to be a statement of his memory, which does not ID the pair. Continuing unpacking, the sailors section is about the past 'as it happened', in other words, the sailors lost their chance. The descendants section, however, is prefaced by a 'would'. We can interpret this as "could have, but did not, in fact, the opposite happened". This leads to Tony Ellis' view. However, Sev never mentioned having any children, By Valeria or otherwise, and as Apheta wasn't human I doubt that that would be the source (though perhaps their union provides a Jahi figure?). Maybe Gunnie (the only sailor who protected him) had a child by Sev... Or perhaps Sev had children with Valeria and just didn't remember(jk) to tell us about them.... The idea I'm pursuing here is that 'descendants' doesn't have to be literal, or (if literal) to mean descendants engendered on the Yesod trip.

Perhaps the Hieros only acted as an Ark for survivors in other parts of Urth (did Apu ever have children??)

I remain unconvinced of either argument, that it is the sailors or that it is Sev's children...

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"The most incomprehensible fact about nature is that it is comprehensible"
-- Albert Einstein