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The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 03 Oct 1998

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Tony A. West — 03 Oct 1998, 04:26

Browns3 : yes, I am reading Devil in a Forest right now. I'm really enjoying it so far.... started it yet?

Kieran Mullen — 04 Oct 1998, 20:25 · follows Tony A. West

From: marc at continuumsi.com
Subject: Eclipse question
Date: 2 Oct 1998 05:38:37 -0000

On an unrelated not, it seems clear that Pas is the avatar of Typhon/Piaton (unless there are other two-headed all-powerful monarchs floating around capable of building generation ships). But Pas seems to be a mostly benevolent figure, at least compared to Echidna, Scylla, etc... Whereas, Typhon was clearly a bastard... Guess you'd have to chalk that one up to programmer's error, heh.

It seems reasonable to me. We see Typhon through Severian's eyes. To the average citizen, Typhon is some nigh-omnipotent figure who is the source of all authority. He evolves into a Zeus figure, and Zeus was famous for his human foibles. The Greek and Roman gods were not perfect by any means.

From: "Robert Borski" <rborski at coredcs.com>
Subject: Sev's Sister
Date: Fri, 2 Oct 1998 18:48:29 -0500

Time for me to add my speculations to the mix, since, to the best of my knowledge, no one's yet mentioned the woman I think is Sev's sister.

She's the khaibit known as Barbea and she works out of the House Azure in the Echopraxia.

[Deletia]

Barbea, it appears, resembles what we know of Severian. She is tall, straight-nosed, has limpid eyes, and could be wearing a wig made of gold (so her hair may actually be dark).

Hmm... and maybe she's really a man dressed as a woman and is Severian's older brother! I mean this is sort of silly. All exultants are tall with angular features.

[Deletia]

Barbea is a pseudonym; we never learn the khabit's real name, so it could be Severa.

Umm.. It could be Kathy Lee Gifford, She Who Will Not Die.

"Echopraxia" suggests duplication, an echoing of the original: a twinning of sorts. Barbea also has another putative twin in "Chateleine Gracia"--or so Severian observes, even going so far as to claim the two might be the same--just wearing different makeup.

All of the women at the Echopraxie are khaibits, duplicates of exultants.

Saint Barbea is always associated with her brother Sarbelius in hagiographic literature. The bea/-belius endings suggest the ian/a ending of Severa/Severian. Both Barbea and Sarbelius were tortured before being executed.

Ok. Now this starts to be a bit more appealing to me. I couldn't get from Barbea to Severian.

Witches often service the torturers in at least their first sexual encounters (Master Gurloes lost his virginity this way) and according to the LEXICON URTHUS, they're somewhat wanton in their ways. The witches' patron saint is Saint Mag, short for Magdalen, the prostitute of the New Testament. So it's not that big a leap to connect Severa with prostitution.

For me it is! That's like saying the warriors at Apu-Punchau are related to Daria because they both fought in battles. This is a big reach.

Severian will soon be offered the choice of whether he wishes to stay in the guild or leave. I speculate Severa/Barbea has been offered the same deal with the Witches' Guild, but has chosen to leave.

Hmm... And she must be Daria's sister since Daria was a camp-follower and camp-followers are like prostitutes. So maybe they were triplets and...

You can make up all the alternative histories you want but they have stopped having much to do with the text. There's a good pomo term for this which I can't recall.

[Deletia]

Lastly then, there's this quote from Severian himself:

"There was something in the eyes of both women [Barbea, Gracia], in the expression of their mouths, their carriage and the fluidity of their gestures, that was one. It recalled something I had seen elsewhere (I could not remember where), and earlier, yet it was new, and I felt somehow that the other thing, that which I had known earlier, was to be preferred."

[Deletia]

Severian, seeing Severa, recognizes in her the eidetic ghost of their mother; she looks familiar, yet is new. He recalls--if inchoately--his mother and it's the emotional warmth of this (for what newborn infant does not love his mother) that leads him to prefer it.

Why can this not be an invocation of his mother *without* meaning that she is related to her? Or merely a reference to Thecla or Thea?

Christopher R. Culver <crculver at aol.com>

Well, Robert, you've certainly looked into this deeply, and I think your theory is sound, but I don't like the ramifications. If Merryn is not Severian's sister, then what will happen in the Book of the Short Sun? Looks to me like we're going to see another one of Severian's notorious one night stands.

Can you review the evidence why you think Merryn is his sister. She seems sadly obtuse from the few lines she has.

Kieran Mullen