

Sev's Sister: II

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 05 Oct 1998

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Robert Borski — 05 Oct 1998, 00:20

Here's a couple more items in my Barbea-as-Sev's sister thesis, even though I don't know what the pomo word for alternative history is, either.

In CLAW, Severian says, "I recalled the witches, their madness and their wild dancing in the Old Court on nights of rain; the cool, virginal beauty of the red-robed Pelerines."

Note that of the three khaibits presented to Severian and Roche in the House Azure, only Barbea dances for them. There's also a second link there, in that Catherine--the mother of Severian and his sister--is a Pelerine.

I'd also like to mention again the line about Barbea's hair: "Her hair was so near to burnished gold that it might have been a wig of golden wires."

Compare this to what Hildegrin calls Dorcas, the paternal grandmother of Severian and Severa: "'Goldy-hair.'" To me, with a writer of Wolfe's circumspection, this is more than simple coincidence, but an attempt to link Barbea and Dorcas.

Along similar lines is Severian's remark about an antipolaric other, which Sev describes as "...a bright twin if we are dark" --possibly another reference to the goldenness of Barbea.

As for Kieran Mullen's contention that "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?" Why would memories of his mother be triggered by someone who is a non-relative? Or Thea/Thecla? This the khaibit of Chateleine Barbea, after all, not Thea/Thecla. And how do you explain Severian's parenthetical "I don't remember where" subclause?

The one place where Kieran and I do agree, however, is the unlikelihood of Merryn being Severa. Other than she's definitely a witch, I see little for making such a case. On the contrary, Severian believes he's met someone like the already adult Merryn when he was much younger, when he was sent on an errand to the Witches Keep. And Merryn for her part does not seem to understand that Severian's cloak indicates he's a torturer--she, a next-door-neighbor-one-tower-over, has to be told this by the Cumaeen, an Extrasolarian. And why the name change? Born Severa, how and why has she become Merryn?

And then one last question for Kieran Mullen: while you're quick to dismiss both Barbea and Merryn as candidates for Severa, do you have an original theory of your own? I promise to be much less facetious in discussing your ideas than you were with mine, so please, if you have something, ante up and join the game. The stakes are high, of course, but as always the winnings are paltry.

Robert Borski