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The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 11 Oct 1998

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Robert Borski — 11 Oct 1998, 23:03

But isn't the monial Catherine, uh, rather =short= for an exultant?
I believe somewhere in the text it says that Thecla was Severian's adult height at the age of thirteen . . . and she kept growing, of course.

Catherine is the daughter of an armigette (Valeria) and an exultant (Caesidias), so she may be less than full exultant height. She probably also has no khaibit (since I doubt her father is going to use her as a hostage concubine); hence no heightening or rejuvenating hormones. (Is this what you meant, SBear?)

Second larva: Why haven't we heard this from mantis? (Not that I automatically reject everything you write, Robert.) Congratulations from me also.

Speaking of larvae, anyone willing to accept the notion that Famulimus and Barbatus are short-lived larvae, and Ossipago is the Hierodule version of Mr. Million? I'm also leaning toward the theory that Camoena (the Cumaeen) is the adult mother, with Merryn (who addresses her as "Mother" and is described herself at least once as a "famula" [cf. Famulimus]) another larval form. It's also possible the living statues of the House Absolute are an intermediate stage, either pupae or eggs.

One last question for raster on the Claw's disappearance: when and how do you think the Claw winds up in Sev's sabertache? Is it after the altar crash, meaning that injured Agia, with her wits still about her, limps over, picks up the Claw, limps back over to unconscious (or dead) Sev, whereupon she puts it in in his sabertache, because she knows she's gonna be eventually stripsearched by the high nun of the Pelerines? Because I've never believed Agia's involvement; if she's not looking for coins as her brother suggests when Sev comes to visit her and Agilus in his cell, I believe she's looking for Sev's whetstone, which she knows is in his sabertache. Sev also doesn't notice he has the Claw until just before the Pelerines torch their cathedral tent, which is, what, two days after the fiacre crash? Leaving me still perplexed as to how and when the Claw made its way into Sev's possession in the first place.

To Kieran: As for the idea that Wolfe is making use of cheap writing elements
when he makes Severian's family the way it is, I offer this explanation:

Wolfe

is fallible. Aren't we all?

In my opinion, cheap writing elements are much more accessible to ordinary folk. Wolfe's fiction is not, and he may well have died before someone came along (if ever) and figured out the various genealogical timeloops I've proposed (this presupposes they're right, which they may not be).

But that's a common enough experience, I'm sure everybody knows it--you work hard on something, send it off and wait. Years go by.
Nothing happens--the thing is lost under a rock in a deep cave in the

middle of a black forest at the bottom of the ocean. It moulders among the boulders.

That's why I post to the list, rather than submit to non-electronic media. I'm old and I don't care to have my work published posthumously.

Eeek! Surely there is a middle ground between run-away exegesis and silence. Either extreme of censorship (on discourse or criticism) seems bad.

John Clute is probably the pre-eminent sf/fantasy critic and even he's not immune to wild and wooly Wolfean exegesis. Or haven't you read his essay in STROKES (since disclaimed) about how Catherine and the old autarch are one and the same (a theory I would have been crucified for if I'd been the first to propose it)?

Hmm... interesting. Especially since the aquaestor takes on the role of Master Palaemon. But isn't it stated or implied that Severian is the first torturer-autarch? And wouldn't there have to be an RNA transfer to Appian during the period we know Palaemon is still alive? (Actually, do we have a date for his death?)

Stinky the First (ne Reechy) aka Ymar the Almost Just was a torturer autarch. And I'm not sure what you mean by a RNA transfer (especially since in all likelihood Palaemon isn't human).

I recently read "In Looking Glass Castle" and wondered if the man living in the house might seem less like a hallucinatory problem if he actually dressed like a woman and had a life outside of the house. It would make it easier for him to survive. If he is mentioned in the book but is in disguise, it might be that he could have gotten on the boat at the end of the book. Does anyone have any ideas about who he could be?

prion: in my opinion, the man is a figment of Daisy's imagination. Read Henry James' "Turn of the Screw," followed by Edmund Wilson's seminal essay "The Ambiguity of Henry James," and then maybe go back to my post on ILGC in the archives. Or maybe he's now Norma(n) Bates.

Robert Borski

Peter Westlake — 12 Oct 1998, 11:08 · follows Robert Borski

At 23:03 1998-10-11 -0500, Robert Borski wrote:

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Yes, that was it.

Hmm... interesting. Especially since the aquaestor takes on the role of Master Palaemon. But isn't it stated or implied that Severian is the first torturer-autarch? And wouldn't there have to be an RNA transfer to Appian during the period we know Palaemon is still alive? (Actually, do we have a date for his death?)

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Did I miss something? Also, what was the evidence for the Cumaean being called Camoena? Or the Autarch being Appian?

I do know what Kieran meant about RNA, though: there was a theory around for a while that RNA was the carrier of memory. Back in the 1970's (ish) someone taught planarian worms to run a T-shaped maze, then fed them to other planarian worms, and put those worms into the maze. They appeared to guess which way to turn more often than chance would allow. There naturally followed a lot of stories based on that, often making much of the cannibal belief that you could absorb your enemies' strength and other virtues by eating them. This account is taken from what I recall of the introduction to one such story, so it may not be scientifically or historically accurate, but it reflects the author's understanding, which is what matters here. The experiment seemed to suggest that memory must be carried chemically (cell structures wouldn't survive being ground up and eaten) and RNA was a favorite contender for the role. I believe the theory has gone away now, though.

Spectacled Bear.