

Severian: His Memory

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 18 Dec 1998

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Dan Parmenter — 18 Dec 1998, 13:35

From: Michael Straight <straight at email.unc.edu>

That's the thing. If he didn't go on about his perfect memory so much, we might cut him some slack. But as it is, if Severian is so perfect, what alternative do we have but to call him a liar?

However, I rather like the idea of a narrator who tells us he's got a perfect memory, but who really doesn't.

I remember on my first read thinking Severian's memory was just a cheap trick to justify a memoir having such great detail. Now I wonder if maybe his constantly going on about it might be an attempt to convince himself of his own perfection.

I have often favored the idea that his memory *is* perfect and that the imperfectly-recalled details may be reflective of the multiple timelines/Severians floating about. Remember, the non-New Sun Severian did become a walker in the corridors of time. Isn't it possible that his return to Urth (before Severian1's time) subtly altered the timestream in certain ways? In other words, he really would have a perfect memory if there were only one timeline, but since we know there are multiple timelines, this may result in some "version control" problems. Severian can be thought of as a combination of the hero of "By His Bootstraps" (Heinlein) crossed with Borges' Funes.

Among other things :-)

D