

Amended Seasons

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 20 Aug 1999

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Roy C. Lackey — 20 Aug 1999, 03:27

mantis,

Looking at the exact way it is expressed in the appendix to CLAW, "The *month* is the (then) lunar one of 28 days...", it would seem that the parenthetical "then" is intended by Wolfe to indicate that, for whatever reason, Lune in Severian's time *does* have a more precise 28 day cycle than in ours.

Though I have made a valid argument from the text that the Feast of Holy Katharine takes place in spring, I can make another, also from the text, that seems to place it squarely in winter. Besides the snow that fell on the night of the trip to the House Azure, other weather-related comments made during the trip seem to imply that the season is far deeper into winter than just a late-winter snowfall. Also, after that trip, on the second page of the next chapter, titled "The Last Year", Sev says: "All that winter while snow whitened the Old Yard, I came up from the oubliette as if from sleep, and started to see the tracks my feet left behind me and my shadow on the snow. Thecla was sad that winter...". Next paragraph: "Spring came, and with it the purple-striped and white-dotted lilies of the necropolis." Now, these comments seem to place the Feast in the dead of winter, not even "in the fading of winter". This seems to contradict my idea that the Feast actually takes place in late spring, yet what I posted earlier in defense of my idea is also true. Wolfe expends the better part of a page on Ultan talking about his guilds' spring ceremonies and mentions all the trees giving shade along Iubar street in Nessus.

So, in the same year, the year Drotte and Roche were elevated, after the Feast of Holy Katharine, Ultan tells Sev that the curators' feast day is in early spring and has already passed. Then, Sev goes back to the torturers' tower, meets Thecla, begins his daily sessions with her, it is hard winter, time passes, and *then* spring comes.

Further, the following year, the year of Sev's elevation, on the eleventh day after Thecla's death, when Sev is being escorted to see Palaemon, he passes an open door to the outside and sees the sunlight and "breathed that wet wind that tells in winter that spring is almost come." To complicate matters, on the very next page (page 105), while talking to Palaemon, Sev notes: "The first brass-backed fly of the new summer buzzed against the port." Huh? There's a late-winter wind coming in the door and a new-summer fly at the window? Yet trees and flowers are in bloom outside the Citadel when Sev leaves for exile.

It's tempting to just dismiss these and the other Gurloes two-day-week anomaly I mentioned before as Wolfe just screwing up, but I don't think so. The contradictory elements of each instance come too close together to be mistakes. I think Wolfe is saying something about the nature of the Citadel. Perhaps the fact that it contains the elusive Atrium of Time, its connection to the House Absolute via the space/time warping library and probably the subterranean tunnels, as well as the implied fact that Holy Katharine has been making her annual appearances, seemingly unchanged, for centuries, all serve to establish that the Citadel, though coeval with the Urth around it, is not entirely congruent with it.

Roy