

# Juturna

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 22 Oct 1999

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Alice Turner — 22 Oct 1999, 23:48

From: "Greene, Carlton" <CGreene2 at hunton.com>  
Subject: The Conation of Catodon; Severian's skull (long)

Thanks for a really thoughtful message, most of which I'm not addressing. But I do want to offer this, in a conjectural way.

One last, odd wrinkle: Sev's conversation with Juturna in the audience chamber of the House Absolute. Sev says of Juturna: "She saved me once when I was a boy" and then to her "Do you remember that?" Juturna replies "No. It hasn't yet occurred. It will, because you spoke."

What does this say about Juturna's actions throughout the novels? We now have reason to think that they were motivated in part by her encounter with Sev before the Flood. Why does she help him knowing the New Sun will come (and Abaia be destroyed) if she does? And earlier, what help does she think she can bring to humans about to be drowned in the HA? (see 305-06). Why isn't Juturna concerned about Abaia's demise both just before and after the flood? Was she somehow bound to go back and save Sev because of his words about it, but still hoped to manipulate him in Abaia's favor in the past?

Perhaps the immediate conclusion, given the odd powers of the undines, is to assume that they too are living backward like the cacogens. But, maybe because I've been thinking about Matthew's gospel, I'd like to suggest a more "literary" answer: This incident will be taken as truth because it has now been "spoken" or written about, just as Christian fundamentalists take the biblical nativity myths (the more far-fetched ones) as "occurring." In short, it will become part of the legend of Severian simply because he has told of it, not necessarily because it "really" happened.

Only a suggestion, but at least as likely as living backward.

As for Juturna's motives, who can say? She seems a great Niobe figure weeping for Urth's children just at the onset of the flood. The "real" Juturna (or Diuturna, yes, exactly the same as the lake) was a Roman fountain and water goddess and I believe that under Lake Diuturna is Rome itself (I am not of the South American school). So Juturna is a sort of symbol of past greatness and--who knows?--maybe a hope for future greatness too. That marvelous image of the joyous leap from wave into sunshine at the end of NS#5 makes me hope so.

-alga