

The Closing Door

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 06 Aug 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2333>

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Roy C. Lackey — 06 Aug 2000, 23:58

Last year, while pointing out some of Severian's inconsistencies as a narrator, I noted the fact that the night before Thecla's death Sev went to his mausoleum to sulk. He said then that it was his last visit there (I, XII). That was not true; he went there several months later, after becoming autarch, and retrieved the coin Vodalus had given him (IV, XXXVI). Also, the little verse he said when he retrieved the coin differed slightly from the verse given when he hid it, so that "glass" became "grass". Further, he went to the mausoleum again fifty Urth years later, after the flood, though he didn't go in (V, XLVII).

I only recapitulate these facts as background for something else associated with these visits that I had not noticed before, no matter how many times I read the books. On the first visit mentioned above, Sev describes the jammed door of the mausoleum as the "half-open door" (which is also half-closed, depending on how you look at it). On the second visit above, it is described as "three-quarters shut". On the third visit above, "...I found it's long-jammed door shut, the force of the onrushing sea having completed a motion begun perhaps a century ago."

How are we to account for the progressive closing of the 'jammed' door? What did Wolfe intend by it? And what of the time frame? Sev was no more than twenty years old when he became autarch, if that. He ruled for ten years, then was gone for forty more on his trip to Yesod. So, "a century ago" would have been about thirty years before he was born. What was going on then that began the moving of the door?

Roy

Peter Stephenson — 07 Aug 2000, 22:10 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy wrote:

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This is a fascinating point. Here's my guess.

The mausoleum is the grave of Severian's alter ego. At one level, this is a real other Severian. But the only time Wolfe works at one level is when he's fixing the exhaust pipe under his car. So it is also the ability of Severian to be someone other than his present self. (As recently noted, Severian himself says that our real tragedy is that we can't be.) As he is ensnared into his role of conciliator, the door gradually becomes shut on the other possibilities, the other Severians.

It has also been discussed here that the arrival of the New Sun started in the past, before the present Severian was born. The arrival of the New Sun and the shutting of the door nicely tie the Severian we see to his destiny. With the floods brought by the New Sun, his destiny is

complete.

Maybe.

corncrake

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