

Symbolism in The Sword of The Lictor

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 29 Jan 1998

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Patri10629 — 29 Jan 1998, 14:47

Buds,

In THE SWORD OF THE LICTOR (p.162--SWORD & CITADEL Trade P)...

Severian is on a boat observing his first floating island. He is moved to a meditation on "symbolism."

"The great question...is determining what these symbols mean in and of themselves. We are like children who look at print and see a serpent in the last letter but one, and a sword in the last."

Now, with some intimidation for this learned group of Wolfeans, and some concern that what I'm about to say is either A) perfectly obvious, or, B) redundant, having been noted before...I'll fling my thoughts into the wings of cyberspace.

He's asking us to look (really look) at the final two letters in the word: "last."

They are S--the serpent, and t--the knife.

st

They are pictographs. Symbols in their own right. The root of writing, no doubt. Abstract representations of something else. Isn't there a symbol that incorporates both the snake & the sword? Isn't it the symbol of "Doctor"? Or, if you will, "Healer"?

They are also symbols of sounds. They form the word "Est."

They are also the abbreviation of the word "Saint."

As a Saint is (in a sense) an abbreviation of God. Something greater and richer embodied in a smaller vessel.

I think Severian is talking, in code, about himself.

Best,

Patrick O'leary