

Severian the Unreliable

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 04 Sep 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4195>

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Thomas Bates — 04 Sep 2003, 05:37

Something to get discussion started again:

I think an important passage to examine when trying to figure out what is going on with Sev's memory is this one from The Claw of the Conciliator, Chapter 8:

"The truth is that I am one of those who are cursed with what is called perfect recollection. We cannot, as I have sometimes heard foolishly alleged, remember everything. I cannot recall the ordering of the books on the shelves in the library of Master Ultan, for example. But I can remember more than many would credit: the position of each object on a table I walked past when I was a child, and even that I have recalled some scene to mind previously, and how that remembered incident differed from the memory of it I have now." (II, VIII)

So, even he knows and admits that he can recall the same event differently. I don't think that he's lying about having perfect recall. Maybe he's trying to reassure himself that his memory is working properly when he mentions it so many times. We know that he fears that he's insane. I'll continue quoting:

"It was my power of recollection that made me the favorite pupil of Master Palaemon, and so I suppose it can be blamed for the existence of this narrative, for if he had not favored me, I would not have been sent to Thrax bearing his sword."

Maybe Palaemon, when he was trying to give advice, knew Severian would just disregard it or misunderstand it, which seems to fit with his naivete and gullibility.

"Some say this power is linked to weak judgment--of that I am no judge. But it has another danger, one I have encountered many times.

When I cast my mind back into the past, as I am doing now and as I did then when I sought to recall my dream, I remember it so well that I seem to move again in the bygone day, a day old-new, and unchanged each time I draw it to the surface of my mind, its eidolons as real as I. I can even now close my eyes and walk into Thecla's cell as I did one winter evening; and soon my fingers will feel the heat of her garment while the perfume of her person fills my nostrils like the perfume of lillies warmed before a fire. I lift her gown from her and embrace that ivory body, feeling her nipples pressed to my face..."

I wonder if Severian remembers the things he fantasizes or imagines and thinks they are real? Is it possible that he doesn't know the difference between reality and fantasy?

He goes on, remembering the dream from when he slept in the bed with Baldanders.

"Again I bestride the mitred, leather-winged steed. Pelicans fly below us with stiffly formal strokes, and gulls wheel and keen."

Here again, the recollection recounted here differs from the original description. No pelicans or gulls were mentioned before. Another data point for the theory that he mentions his perfect memory almost every time he describes something differently than he did before.

Thomas Bates

James Wynn — 04 Sep 2003, 16:45 · follows Thomas Bates

I recently took a look at "Shadow and Claw" at the bookstore. The Roche/Drotte confusion is there. Does anyone know whether the Mint/Marble confusion is carried into "Epiphany of the Long Sun" from Exodus? I know that one place it occurs is in the "The Best Thieves in the Whorl" chapter and the other occurs shortly before or after.

The quote I'm referring to occurs during Siyuf's conversation with Mint. My copy of Exodus says:

"Siyuf looked back to Maytera Marble. "You wish to tell me of the Charter of your city, before this man have interrupt you. I find this of interest."

Does it say "Maytera Mint" in "Epiphany"?

--- Crush

----- Original Message -----

From: "Thomas Bates" <thomasgbates at yahoo.com>
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Subject: (urth) Severian the Unreliable
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Thomas Bates

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