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The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 24 Mar 1998

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Dan Parmenter — 24 Mar 1998, 10:26

From: tony.ellis at futurenet.co.uk (Tony Ellis)

My point is, Jonas could be sticking very closely to the truth, in which case we could assume that the southern seacost home story is also as good as true. It's another argument against Jonas being speaking Asian, basically. He could have picked up such a language later in life, of course, but I still have faith in my computer-speak theory.

That was my initial strong impression as well. The robot parents argument doesn't seem outrageous either. Wolfen robots seem to concern themselves with keeping up appearances in order to not shock and horrify people too much.

And on an unrelated note, has anyone yet compiled a list of known inconsistencies in Severian's perfect memory? I mentioned one recently, the material of the claw's sack changing from "leather" to "manskin" at some point (of course "manskin" would be a form of leather, but more on that momentarily). I don't have the specific citation offhand, though I'll attempt to locate it. What I *do* have is another example:

Book 1, Chapter 9 "The House Azure"

"The person who admitted us wore thick-soled shoes and a yellow robe..."

Book 4, chapter 24 "The Flier"

"He was robed in saffron, as I had always seen him..."

Given the somewhat symmetrical construction of the series (at least before UOTNS), it seems significant that this first (I believe) mention of the robe having been saffron (which is of course a shade of yellow, though "saffron robes" usually refers to the almost orange color favored by Hare Krishnas, indeed, this is how many people refer to such robes) occurs at Severian's final dealings with the Autarch, which matches up nicely with the first mention, back when they were yellow.

What does it mean? If Severian's memory is truly perfect, it might suggest a parallel-but-not-that-different reality hypothesis wherein each Severian has a perfect memory and it's the individual realities themselves that vary. At the symbolic/semiotic level, does the shift from yellow to red reflect on the change in the sun? Does the fact that it's red mean that Severian is coming dangerously close to the possible future of ice? It's certainly a crisis point, where the whole thing could have gone wrong and he could have ended up as that other Severian buried in the Necropolis (who Severian tells us did in fact go through most of this stuff and end up meeting the Autarch). This is of course wild speculation.

D