

more perfect memories

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 25 Mar 1998

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Dan Parmenter — 25 Mar 1998, 15:48

From: "Alice Turner" <al at interport.net>

On another subject, It has always bothered me that Severian seems to take for granted that his relationship with the inner Thecla is unique. But the alzabo drug would be expected to cause a similar effect in everyone who ate that meal. Moreover, Vodalus & Co. have done this before, with other corpses. I suppose that one could explain this by saying that the alzabo effect is ordinarily powerful but temporary ("a fellow mortal who will live again--strongly, for a time--in us")---like an LSD experience, say---but that the presence of the Claw, or something in his heritage, somehow imprints Thecla on Sev in a unique way. Nevertheless, this isn't explained, and it's weird to think of a couple of dozen or so people all experiencing Thecla the way Sev does.

I thought that it was fairly clear that the reason that Severian retains Thecla's consciousness is that he has a perfect memory, and thus the fleeting experience of Thecla that the others share becomes simply another stored memory.

Or as Michael Straight put it:

I wonder if there could be some difference attributable to Severian's memory. Perhaps for everyone else the sharing of Thecla is a fleeting thing, but since Severian can't forget, Thecla is always with him.

Except that all the autarchs are supposed to share all the memories of the previous ones. So we could still save the idea if the autarch's alzabo is more powerful, so that autarchs always have the experience that Severian only has with Thecla because of his perfect memory.

Severian tells us that some of the ancient Autarchs are lost to him, which only seems possible if the previous Autarch's did NOT have eidetic memory, or at least SOME previous Autarch didn't. It seems to me that by the end of CITADEL, Severian has 2 "full" consciousnesses residing within him (that of Thecla and that of the previous Autarch) as well as the many others, who are dimmer. This doesn't fit with his description in chapter 32 where he speaks of walking as if surrounded by an army. He doesn't say anything at all about the old Autarch and Thecla being more prominent or "fuller" memories.

Also, what about the possibility that Vodalus deceived Severian and the whole thing was a sham? Wolfe describes the Thecla corpse as being carried in and then briefly concealed to be replaced with a plate of meat. In the same way that Severian was never actually aware of the Claw being planted on him, he never actually bit into Thecla's body, at least not at Vodalus' banquet. The aquastor Malubrius refers to himself and the Triskele having been drawn from Severian's memories, couldn't Severian have drawn up Thecla's consciousness himself from his own memories of her (indeed he alludes to this). But if so, how would he remember things that he had never discussed with her? Severian remembers things from her childhood and of course he remembers the door where the Exultants come into the antechamber to torture the prisoners, but who is to say that these things were not revealed to him by Thecla? He certainly

doesn't comment upon it. I don't advocate this hypothesis, but it has crossed my mind on numerous occasions.

And what about those yellow robes, eh?

D