

yellow robes

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

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m.driussi — 25 Mar 1998, 22:18

Reply: Item #1901496 from URTN at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET03#

Dan,

FWIW:

The alcalde of Saltus also "wore his yellow gown of office and his gold chain" (II, ch. 4).

The Old Autarch wears the yellow robe and (in contrast to gold chain) an iron phallus necklace (containing, as it turns out, the autarchial alzado extract [which =is= said to be more powerful, I believe, than the Vodalarii version] and a skull smashing knife).

Master Gurloes gives Severian a memorable lecture about poisonous aphrodesiacs and an iron phallus (II, ch. 7).

Re: yellow and color symbolism:

"According to Beaumont, colour has a very special significance in Chinese symbolism, for it is emblematic of rank and authority; yellow, for instance, because of its association with the sun, is considered the sacred privilege of the royal family [contrast with the European sense of purple's royalty] . . . Interesting evidence of the ominous and tragic character of orange . . . is forthcoming in the following passage taken from Heinrich Zimmer, the orientalist: `After the Future Buddha had severed his hair and exchanged his royal garments for the orange-yellow robe of the ascetic beggar (those outside the pale of human society voluntarily adopt the orange-yellow garment that was originally the covering of condemned criminals being led to the place of execution'" (entry on "Colour," A DICTIONARY OF SYMBOLS, J.E. Cirlot).

Re: the memory thing being how Thecla is captured within Severian. I personally think this is the earlier level ("explanation" or "excuse") of perception--since in reading through the book the first time we know that Sev has this memory but we don't know he has the Claw (much later we will find out he doesn't even =need= the Claw itself, re: Triskele) nor what the Claw does or can do.

The next level is that it is the Claw's doing--that it has resurrected Thecla within Severian (or "bound her spirit to his body in the same way that a spirit is normally bound to its body"). And as I've intimated, the level beyond that brings us back to the beginning but with a difference (so our motion is a spiral rather than a circle): the Claw's powers come from Severian himself.

But yeah, we've got Father, Sun, and Holy Ghost walking around in one body, with a chorus of badly xeroxed autarchs going all the way back to Ymar the Just-A-Smudge.

=mantis=