

Mellow yellow pharmicon (remember?!)

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 25 Mar 1998

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Alice Turner — 25 Mar 1998, 19:46

Dan,

I lived in Bangkok for a time, and saw Buddhist monks in their saffron yellow robes daily. In daily life, at least among English-speakers (and TBOTNS is written in English), the terms were used interchangeably. Certainly no one referred to the robes as orange, and as they became well worn (monks are poor) they faded. It is far more likely that the robes refer back to Buddhism than to the odd American Hare Krishna cult.

Rostrum,

I wonder if there could be some difference attributable to Severian's memory.

Well, of course, but by itself that just doesn't seem quite enough for her powerful presence.

Tony,

Yes. Jonas is a sailor, so it would be natural for him to regard a ship, or perhaps all space, as his home.

That's not quite what I meant, as I was speculating about his home world, but of course you are right, and I think he does exactly that.

I've always assumed that Jonas simply escapes to a -place- where he can be repaired, rather than a time. (A place in our universe, that is, rather than some other.) One of the worlds of the Hierodules, perhaps, or some other planet that still has a viable technology.

That must be right. I know who could fix him up! Well, maybe Ossipago could, but I was thinking of--oh, what is his name?--the talus-maker on the Whorl. You know for sure *he's* going to turn up again--Silk's gonna need them Tall Asses.

Robert and Marie, too, could have come from that place.

I think if they come from anywhere it's the past rather than a parallel Earth, since it's implied pretty strongly that the Botanical Gardens extend into Urth's past. But don't forget that they may simply be "chant-caught" contemporaries of Severian. I've always loved that scene for its tantalising ambiguity.

Me too. And for the old-movie quality. Yes, I agree with you. I was just scratching my head about Jonas, who certainly comes from the past, but not that far into the past.

Chris,

The autarch mentions he has a pharmacon *similar* to the alzado, but not the same. No doubt it was much more effective to bring hundreds of personalities

into another person.

Yes, but Thecla's presence is very powerful long before Sev takes the pharmacon. For me, it's just a little something that I wish Wolfe had bothered to clear up. Oh, well, let's just call it the Claw's influence.

-alga-

C R Culver — 26 Mar 1998, 02:32 · follows Alice Turner

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Probably they go back to Buddhism. According to Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddha made his robes from the cloth strewn around the Ganges, funeral wrappings, menstrual napkins, and all that stuff. They were mostly saffron, I imagine. Apply whatever symbolism you want from that to the BotNS, if you'd like. Interestingly enough, Mahayana is the vehicle of Buddhism in which the robes of the modern-day followers are **not** saffron, in my experience. Pure Land and Zen robes are black.

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Careful there. Jonas knew of Korea and the Korean language (he could tell KLS's nationality from his name), so he comes from a time not too remote from modern Korea because a significant amount of linguistic drift has not occurred.

That must be right. I know who could fix him up! Well, maybe Ossipago could<

Ossipago and Sidero worry me. I wonder if they are relics from a past science, kept in repair but no longer made (like the fliers), or if they are still produced. Do the Hierodules still have the ability to heal Jonas?

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<http://members.aol.com/crculver/index.html>

Michael Straight — 26 Mar 1998, 11:29 · follows C R Culver

On Wed, 25 Mar 1998, Alice Turner wrote:

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It depends on how the drug works. And what it's like to have a memory like Severian's. And whether you can draw a sharp line between memory and self.

If Severian's memory is more analogous to a perfect hard-drive, then I agree that simply having

Thecla's "files" on his hard drive would not be sufficient to account for the way Severian seems to almost become part-Thecla.

But imagine instead that it's more like what Larry Niven describes in World of Ptavvs, where when a telepath reads a person's mind, the two personalities struggle within the brain to determine which is the "host" and which is the "visitor," and if the visitor's personality is strong enough, the brain may end up convinced that the visitor is actually its real, host, personality, even after the telepathic link is broken. A poor and totally unjust description of Niven, but it's the best I can do. Read the book instead, it's one of Niven's better ones, IMHO.

Anyway, imagine that having a perfect memory is not just having information at hand, but having a greater degree of continuity with your past self--since you can remember exactly how you felt when you were six, and not just project back, you might even be able to get a sense of how your six-year-old self would have thought/felt about current events.

For Vodalus, et. al., with their weaker version of the alzebo drug, they spend a few minutes where their memories and personality become intermixed with Thecla, but then the experience becomes a memory, subject to degradation, only imperfectly recalled.

For Severian, however, remembering the experience perfectly may be indistinguishable from having the experience. He doesn't just have Thecla's files, he's got her "operating system," and he doesn't just have it on a hard drive, accessible when he chooses, but always loaded in RAM.

The autarch alzebo drug is stronger, so the autarchs never quite forget, (or never quite stop having--is there a difference?) the experience of communion with earlier autarchs.

-Rostrum