

Severian's Humanity

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 07 Apr 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/481>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Terence Nickolette — 07 Apr 1998, 18:31

Sorry for the error in my last post. Let me complete my thought:

□From a practical, perhaps male, point of view, Severian didn't need to return to the whorehouse. He had his trysts with Thecla in her cell. It was painful because he didn't like the idea of Thecla as a object. The memory was painful because he had come to know her person in her cell.

Severian is shockingly matter of fact about the pain he inflicts. Which leads me to ask if there has been any discussion of the emotional, inner journey that Severian travels in the BOTNS. When does he find his humanity? I would say it starts to develop when he finds and cares for Triskele. But then we see him strutting for the crowd when he severs heads in Saltus. He seems cruel and unfeeling towards Dorcus when he beds Jolenta and later Cyriaca.

Wandering in the mountain wilderness after Typhon kills little Severian seems to me to be a turning point for Severian.

Terry Nickolette

m.driussi — 08 Apr 1998, 00:11 · follows Terence Nickolette

Reply: Item #6224292 from URTN at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET#

Terry Nickolette,

We might better call this "Severian's sense of Mercy"; but even so, it is (still) a tangle. Each act Severian performs can be qualified.

Severian's relationship with Triskele is that of human and animal. Severian's "mercy" in giving Thecla a knife, while on the one hand a testament of his love being so great that he would go against his own guild, is largely a result of his spiteful desire to avenge himself of her "inadequate" degree of love for him. Severian's release of Cyriaca is less tainted. Giving half a whetstone to the Green Man is relatively clean mercy. Severian's lack of mercy is instrumental in getting little Severian's family killed. (In the same sort of pattern that leads to Valeria being killed.)

But when he gets inside the castle of Baldanders and sees the vivisectioned woman, he himself notes the change within himself. So this is a benchmark of sorts.

It seems much easier for Severian to use the Claw on strangers; he prudently (and masterfully) avoids killing such clear and present enemies as Agia; yet people closer to his heart have a much harder time--another reason for Catherine to keep her distance (Merryn, too)!

=mantis=