

The argument for Intractability:

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 22 Dec 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5287>

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Jordon Flato — 22 Dec 2008, 17:46

David Said:

<It's also not clear exactly how the Conciliator myth influences events, although that's something that can be understood broadly.>

1. Well, for one, Severian would never have been born. His mother was with the Pellerines, who would not have existed if it weren't for Severian becoming the Conciliator. I think it's clear Sev's mother ran away from the Pellerines, and again, they wouldn't exist without a successful Severian.

2. The Conciliator and the Guild: Well, the guild was ruled by a woman when Sev met up with them as Conciliator. He killed the woman, and seems to have initiated the time of male only membership in the Guild. His actions led to the destruction of part of the wall of the citadel and the leaning of the witchtower. Maybe that isn't part of the intractability, but it shows that Severian BEFORE HE DROWNED THE FIRST TIME, and thus apparently before the first muddling with his timeline, had effected the past by having the wall blown up and the witchtower leaning, which shows that when he was born, he had already succeeded as the New Sun.

3. If he hadn't already succeeded, then Ymar wouldn't have been Autarch and as such the world Severian would have inhabited if he HADN'T come back as Conciliator wouldn't have existed as it did, or even close.

You can argue, I guess, that other events could have happened that would have tangentially made all of these other events occur: Maybe his mother was imprisoned another way, or maybe Ymar would have decided to become ruler after all, and Typhon would have been taken down without the need of a myth of a Conciliator to rally his foes around. Maybe Ymar would have come up with the idea of Autarchy, or taking the throne. Maybe the guild did continue to exist, and was ruled by women, or that women continued to be a part, but Severian's life was similar enough to come into being anyway, or that women left the guild for some other reason. I think you have to come up with a pretty much infinite number of if's in that case though, and the case for an unsuccessful, 'tractable' Severian then becomes waaaaaay more improbable in my mind, based on the facts we know, than an Intractable one.

On Sat, Dec 20, 2008 at 11:57 AM, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

The significance of Apu Punchau is a mystery to me. I find it hard to believe that he's related to the Commonwealth state religion.

It's also not clear exactly how the Conciliator myth influences events, although that's something that can be understood broadly.

But you're right about the Guild, whatever form it took---still, if it already existed, then Severian's presence would not have changed things significantly. Unless we knew exactly what changed---and we don't. Other than the color of their cloaks.

Does Severian ever hint that the Guild even remembers its role as the Conciliator's "hosts"? (I can't help but think of the Guild as resembling a

"sons of the Revolution" type organization that claims descent from the soldier who stabbed Christ in the thigh---that the Guild might be aware of the necessary role it played the way Pontius Pilate had a necessary role: not an glorious one, but a necessary one and therefore in its way honorable.)

If none of these 3 things was necessary to Severian's passing the test at Yesod, then the time loop can't be intractable.

However, the loop does seem intended to suggest something important about Ymar and Severian---the first and the last Autarchs, and the first and last to be tested. But what?

Message: 3
Date: Sat, 20 Dec 2008 19:08:35 +0000
From: "Son of Witz" <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org>
Subject: Re: (urth) Particolored Brocade

Son of Witz — 22 Dec 2008, 18:40 · in reply to Jordon Flato

I think Ymar is a key here.

yes, he might have come to rule on his own. yes, the Hierodules might have already had the situation set, and the idea of a candidate for the new sun already in place, but Ymar is a real break from the past, from the Age of the Monarch into the Age of the Autarch, and the change in the guild. With Ymar comes NewSun symbology. The Phoenix Throne, etc. there is more there, but I can't remember it now. He is influential in creating the culture Severian grows into, and it's clear that the Conciliator and his actions mean a lot to him from their brief conversations in the jail.

perhaps Ymar felt that the Conciliator came to set Ymar on the path to be the New Sun and he tried to deal with the hierodules himself. Severian didn't say when the New Sun would come, so perhaps Ymar thought he was the one. He's the only other to take the test except Appian.

On Dec 22, 2008, at 9:46 AM, Jordon Flato wrote:

David Said:

<It's also not clear exactly how the Conciliator myth influences events, although that's something that can be understood broadly.>

I think the Conciliator myth is HUGE in influencing events. The New Sun is said to be the Conciliator Come Again. Obviously, he is influential in revolt against Typhon, reformation of the Torturers/Jailers, woven into the symbols of the Autarchy, and in Severian's own cosmology to have reverence for the notion of the conciliator and his childhood hope/belief in a light that would enoble the world again. The myth is also woven into most of the ordinary citizens cosmologies. All of the characters that are against the coming of the New Sun are aware of that potential coming because of the myth. It's HIGHLY doubtful that average citizens would know about a New Sun otherwise. They would know their sun is dying, but they generally seem to be ignorant that the Monarch/Autarch has Hierodules behind them.

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only flaw there is I believe it was "Some order of monials" and not mentioned specifically as Pelerines.

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The wall wouldn't have been broken, yes. I'm not sure how crucial that is, but Severian's Cenotauph would not have existed, which is where he did a lot of his musing about the "light that would enoble the world"

I really think this "manipulation-free Severian I" is pure speculation by Severian, who probably has a limited, linear notion of time at the point where he writes that. As Apheta points out, events in the future affect things in the past, it's not strictly linear. Severian is spread out in time. He's not merely human in the way the other characters are, he's more like a godling. he's some sort of principle that gets expressed in various times. While he has a linear experience, as all the characters do, the causality seems to be set up in such a way that he was ALWAYS there, always the New Sun. Now, this might seem sort of limiting, and "why bother with all of the plot?". As Jordon has pointed out before, the period narrated by Severian is where he forged the integrity of character that becomes Conciliator/NewSun . And, like Jesus, I have a similar question. IF he was always the Son of God, where was the real test? I don't want to invite a lot of specific argument about theology, just that there is something preordained about his role, and it is his time as a human that is his 'test' the very experience, and he needed to have that experience to fully embody his role. It's about fate & free will here.

On a tangent,

I think I've come to firmly view Book of the New Sun and Urth of the New Sun as separate books. One one hand because Severian wrote Two Books, Not One. The first book is BoTNS, and though not named in Urth, he mentions this manuscript as another work. On the other hand, because BoTNS is a nice daunting puzzle, very esoteric, and UotNS is the exoteric explanation of that puzzle. When Sev wrote BotNS, the mystery was still esoteric for him, mostly speculation "this seems to be what's going on under all this", When he wrote UotNS, he's been through it all, and understands it in an exoteric "this is what went on and this is what it meant" way. I was determined to reread BotNS to see if it was "all there" in the four books, and it pretty much is. I probably would have been too much of a knucklehead to get it without Urth though. I guess Wolfe wrote Urth after seeing how few people actually got what he was hinting at. As if too prove those critics who said that there was "nothing in the elaborate puzzle worth working out" Urth makes it obvious that the puzzle is loaded quite nicely.

~witz