

Severian's Trials

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 02 May 1998

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David_Lebling — 02 May 1998, 12:51

* William Ansley's epigraph

Wonderful epigraph! I hereby petition Ranjit to add it to the Archive Web Pages, and the digest. As they say in alt.folklore.urban, "Motto!"

* mantis, re: The Two Sevs

I had momentarily forgotten the Baldanders-as-contender timeline, thanks for reminding me.

The differences between the lives of Severian1 and Severian2? There's a fruitful avenue for speculation!

Obviously, the first turning point is his rescue from drowning. It is not a coincidence that this is the first incident in the books. The question is, in Sev1's life, what happened? My money says that he was either rescued by one of the other apprentices, or saved himself. (Sev2 engineers his own rescue, as you point out, so it couldn't have happened to Sev1.)

Similarly, his finding and saving Triskele was the second turning point. He even describes what happened in Sev1's life: (paraphrasing) "had we found him even a year earlier, we would have worshipped him as a god". Another nudge happens on his visit to the library, where he gets and is thus exposed to _The Book of the New Sun_ and _The Book of the Wonders of Urth and Sky_ (the others are trivial). I suspect they (and particularly the former) couldn't be found in Sev1's life.

To elaborate on the qualities desired in the bringer of the New Sun, Severian1 was obviously well-supplied with ruthlessness, single-mindedness, and so on. The goal of the timeline engineering was to produce a Severian2 whose victims would forgive him and fight for him in the final battle (Armageddon, anyone?), where only the shades of his victims support him.

This is a wonderful twist on the usual religious point of view, where the question is; will God forgive my sins, how will I be judged? Severian, as a literary Christ-figure, must be judged and forgiven by his victims to restore the earthly paradise.

I think Severian1 lost this battle.

* William Ansley, re: Timeline of _Peace_.

My guess was mostly that. I had found that Emil Ludwig's _Napoleon_ was first published in English in 1925, so Weer probably hadn't read it before about 1927 or 1928 (it was a best seller in 1926). Ludwig's biography was a "popular" one, and one of the first biographical works to use Freudian techniques.

I'll have to get the NYRSF backissue that has the timeline.

--viz

(david_lebling at avid.com)

m.driussi — 02 May 1998, 18:01 · follows David_Lebling

vizcacha,

Yes! Yes! The drowning; the dog Triskele (Severian's first resurrection; excercises in mercy and compassion; the excercises in loss, searching, and letting go. Like Valeria sez: having loved the dog, you can now love another creature); Thecla's books. These are the first milestones warping Sev1 into Sev2.

Sev1 had no Thecla, and certainly no Dorcas. He was sent to Thrax at the request of the Archon of Thrax. Somehow from there he was drawn to the war (as Sev2 muses about Sev1).

Re: Sev1 failing. I will agree with that with the qualification that as the last and only contender he was then =made= to win retroactively. Because Absolute Time is running out: the fork in the road between Ragnarok and Ushas is quickly approaching. The fate of Yesod hangs in the balance.

So in that scene where Sev2 runs down the hallway in Yesod where his lifescenes are portrayed in stained glass (well, portrayed at least <g>), Sev1 walked down the hallway and examined the failures and shortcomings of his life--wondered at how it could have been made better--and was granted the New Sun anyway. This penitent dream of optimization then is part of the white fountain circuit which powers the Claw and begins the actual process of optimization (don't forget that the Claw and the white fountain are independent agents, "quiet characters" if you will). (Which of course is paralleled by Sev2 writing his memoirs, an act which obviously optimizes one's own story at the same time it examines it.)

I.e., failure or not, there has to be a New Sun to power Sev2. If Sev1 fails to bring the New Sun at greater than 51%, why would the enemies lift a finger? Well, that's false on two counts: first, the distinction between friends/enemies of the New Sun is as tricky as angels/devils (i.e., both are working, hammer and anvil like, upon Sev2); second, it is the potential of Sev2 to bring the New Sun that is at issue--Sev2 is the battleground. That Sev1 took the ship to Yesod might have been enough for that iteration.

So Sev1 failed, period. But he =did= make it to Yesod, which was more than any other participants could do.

(Fits nicely with my sense that the Real Present is a clock ticking from Valeria's Regency, beginning when Sev1 steps onto the ship, to the Deluge.)

=mantis=