

Five Severians - Severian-as-clone

The Urth list — 24 messages, 8 voices, 18 Dec 2013

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6488>

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Michael Thayer — 18 Dec 2013, 23:36

David Stockoff: The cloning theory is well grounded, but temporally dislocating the mausoleum is new AFAIK. In a way, I don't like this, because it seems to move the explanation further away rather than explain it. Where is this place? how does Severian get there? who put it there? But Lee is right, and the best answer may simply be "Gene Wolfe." Whether it's out of time or not.

I see none of the usual clues to time dislocation: Severian doesn't refer to time passing or not passing, and it seems like there are easier ways to store clones than by slowing time.

Reread the first and second mausoleum scenes (Shadow, 12-13, 21-22). The passages are pregnant with the concept of time. The door was sprung "long ago," and remains "eternally ajar," and "a moment suffices to describe these things, which I watched for so long," "decades" wouldn't be long enough to write of them, the first thought that obsesses Severian while in the mausoleum is that "at some not-distant time, time itself would stop," and there is little to watch "in the sleepy hours around noon." Shadow 12-13. And again, when he returns to hide his coin, Sev travels over "aged grass" and feels "a proximity in time" regarding the truth of imagined enemies. Shadow 21-22. Far from conclusive, but these passages perhaps provide some textual support for linking the mausoleum, thematically at least, to the concept of time.

David Stockhoff — 19 Dec 2013, 02:10 · in reply to Michael Thayer

On 12/18/2013 6:36 PM, Michael Thayer wrote:

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Thematically, yes. Some of those lines suggest merely great age and stasis, while others do hint of something more. But he did spend many hours there, and the "first thought" about time ending was a thought about himself. The mausoleum is the nexus of the various Severians, and it is he himself he might see if he looks over his shoulder.

Same for the meeting with Valeria. It is after all the Atrium of Time. The dials suggest many different times, not just great age, as though it also is a nexus.

Two tangential observations:

(1) Atrium and mausoleum: Eata believes himself to be related to a famous family and

Eata, believing himself descended of that family, drew the arms of one of the great northern clans on the ceiling above his cot in the year of which I speak.

When Severian meets Valeria, she serves him mate, a northern drink IIRC.

(2) The White Fountain and Green: The "second thought" is

The second was that there existed somewhere a miraculous light-which I

sometimes conceived of as a candle, sometimes as a flambeau---that engendered

life in whatever objects it fell upon, so that a leaf plucked from a bush grew

slender legs and waving feelers, and a rough brown brush opened black eyes and

scurried up a tree.

or is this something else? a more generic idea of paradise?

Michael Thayer — 19 Dec 2013, 03:33 · follows David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff: The mausoleum is the nexus of the various Severians, and it is he himself he might see if he looks over his shoulder.

I don't disagree with this statement at all (in fact I'm very fond of it), and I certainly think you and I are on the same page (and not just literally page 12 of Shadow!) -- but isn't it a bit fuzzy? In what way -- in terms of plot mechanics -- is the mausoleum the nexus of the various Severians?

The assumption behind the statement is that there are five various Severians, one for each coffin, right? But surely these various instances of Severian do not walk the same time-strand/universe. Instead, they exist in alternate time-strands/parallel universes. We know this, textually, because we are expressly informed of at least two such alternate/parallel Severians -- "then those who walk the corridors walked back to the time [the first Severian] was young, and my own story . . . began" Citadel, 406.

The mausoleum suggests strongly that there are five such Severians (we are told of two of the five (Citadel 406), just as we are told two of the five coffins are open/empty (Shadow 12)). But why would the mausoleum in the second/narrator Severian's necropolis house the five coffins for five alternate/parallel Severians if four of the five Severians do not exist in his universe/time-strand? Given the two alternate time-strand Severians we are told of, the two of five open coffins in Severian's mausoleum, the Botanical Gardens, Master Ash's Last House, and the numerous references to time in the mausoleum scenes (Shadow 12-13, 21-22), I think we should seriously consider the possibility that the mausoleum is dislocated in time and may be entered from all five alternate universes. I don't know if you meant it this literally, but, as you say, "the mausoleum is the nexus of the various Severians."

David Stockhoff — 19 Dec 2013, 03:58 · in reply to Michael Thayer

On 12/18/2013 10:33 PM, Michael Thayer wrote:

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Yes, I definitely meant that in terms of timestreams/iterations, but it would depend on how you construct the five timelines: Are they simultaneous, sequential, or concurrent? Are they separated by only a few seconds, enough so they are dislocated from one another? Or is that a meaningless question because they are utterly cut off from one another (Severian seems to doubt it)? Yet we know the five coffins are "here," all at once, all together. There seems nothing magical or technological about the mausoleum; it is merely old and, for Severian, haunted.

As Jeff suggests (and this is the simplest path I can envision), three coffins have dead Severians and two do not yet have dead Severians. Of course there are problems with this---how do the Severians separate to become five, how do they return, how did his "parents" know there would be five of him, and so on. Are they truly clones or are they time-clones? Or eidolons?

And is our Severian #4 or #5? I am not even sure the Severian of UNS is the same Severian as BNS, or that Severian really did pass the test in UNS. If there was a #5 (and there must be!), he may be only a hair better than #4, so that we as readers of UNS would never know the difference if he replaced #4.

And what gets you a coffin? Severian "dies" so many times it's hard to keep track; I think he may leave a corpse once in BNS and once in UNS before his apotheosis. That would be five. How his body would have been interred on Urth I do not know. (Of course you always have the symbolism of the "open tomb," which might require that the last one stand empty---I have no idea.)

On 12/18/2013 9:58 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

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I recall we are told that metal has become rather more precious in Sev's time. The mausoleum may be signified as out of that time by the unstolen funeral bronzes, perhaps similar to Valeria's metal trimmed dress.

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Indeed, that may be the case. Sev completes his BOTNS memoir, departs for Yesod, does not return, and is presumed dead (and does in fact die) filling coffin #4. The final Sev emerges *from the past* via the Corridors of Time, and instead it is Urth who dies at last, washing away the coffins or sealing them inside, in either case removing them from play.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< http://www.tamut.edu/cil >

David Stockhoff — 19 Dec 2013, 13:47 · in reply to Jeffery Wilson

On 12/19/2013 2:17 AM, Jeffery Wilson wrote:

On 12/18/2013 9:58 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

Yes, I definitely meant that in terms of timestreams/iterations, but it would depend on how you construct the five timelines: Are they simultaneous, sequential, or concurrent? Are they separated by only a few seconds, enough so they are dislocated from one another? Or is that a meaningless question because they are utterly cut off from one another (Severian seems to doubt it)? Yet we know the five coffins are "here," all at once, all together. There seems nothing magical or technological about the mausoleum; it is merely old and, for Severian, haunted.

I recall we are told that metal has become rather more precious in Sev's time. The mausoleum may be signified as out of that time by the unstolen funeral bronzes, perhaps similar to Valeria's metal trimmed dress.

Interesting point, and another connection between the two. But where the Atrium is reached by traveling through an underworld, increasing the sense of temporal isolation, the mausoleum is a place Severian visits almost daily that seems well connected to the world by seasons and wildlife. It has a mood of sleepy stasis to it, but then it's Severian's "spirit home" in a way, where he has nothing to do but watch and wait. And of course he remembers everything he ever saw there.

The necropolis is after all guarded, though we see how poorly against a determined attack.

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Thus, leaving a symbolic open tomb. Excellent.

I could have sworn Severian died in BNS too, but not so definitively as when Sidero (I think) kills him. I can't recall the event and I'll have to look for it.

At any rate, it always made me wonder if that was really supposed to tell us our Severian was never a simple flesh-and-blood, born-of-woman person anyway---that he was an eidolon or time-copy all along. Just a thought.

Who built the mausoleum? Severian? Typhon? Ymar? Inire? Gene Wolfe? Was there ever a family who had those arms---one with actual women and children?

Michael Thayer — 20 Dec 2013, 01:38 · in reply to Michael Thayer

David Stockhoff: As Jeff suggests (and this is the simplest path I can envision), three coffins have dead Severians and two do not yet have dead Severians.

Or could it be the opposite: two clones have been released, and three are still yet to be awakened/activated. In this novel, an empty coffin may very well signify resurrection rather than eventual death, and so the two empty coffins could be those abandoned by the two Severians that have exited the mausoleum, gained the throne, and gone to their extrasolar trial (i.e., the two Severians of which we are told on pg. 406 of Citadel), leaving the three closed coffins housing Severians who have yet to rise and exit the mausoleum (note that pg. 12 of Shadow describes the three closed coffins as "waiting" on the shelf - waiting for what?). I know that Jeff's theory that the clones have already participated in the drama and are now dead explains why they are housed in a mausoleum, while my theory does not, and so I view both theories as good ones worthy of further exploration.

David Stockhoff: Are they truly clones or are they time-clones? Or eidolons?

That's what's so confusing -- Wolfe gives us (1) clones, (2) alternate-time-traveling-versions, and (3) computer-hologram/eidolon/aquastor versions. Three independent ways to duplicate an individual. (Unhelpful but interesting tangent: this presents the possibility of the existence of an eidolon of a clone of an alternate timeline Severian, or an alternate timeline version of an eidolon of his clone, etc.) I think Jeff and I have been thinking of the five Severians as literal biological clones (Jeff, I don't mean to speak for you, please correct me if I'm wrong), but maybe the theory works better if the five coffins belong to five alternate-timeline Severians, all housed in the mausoleum which is dislocated in time and reachable from each alternate-time.

I could have sworn Severian died in BNS too, but not so definitively as when Sidero (I think) kills him. I can't recall the event and I'll have to look for it.

Are you thinking of the avern battle with Agilus? I think a common interpretation is that Severian died and came back to life in that scene.

David Stockhoff: I am not even sure the Severian of UNS is the same

Severian as BNS, or that Severian really did pass the test in UNS.

I think a healthy skepticism about whether the narrators of UNS and BotNS are the same version of Severian is fair, but I don't know why you question whether he really did pass the test in UNS? I'm intrigued -- what makes you doubt that?

Jeffrey Wilson: I recall we are told that metal has become rather more precious in Sev's time. The mausoleum may be signified as out of that time by the unstolen funeral bronzes, perhaps similar to Valeria's metal trimmed dress.

Interesting observation. I think we should gather all the evidence and really try to figure out if Wolfe included the clues necessary for the reader to conclude that the mausoleum is temporally dislocated. I'll be working on that - any thoughts would be appreciated.

David Stockhoff: Who built the mausoleum? Severian? Typhon? Ymar? Inire?

Gene Wolfe? Was there ever a family who had those arms---one with actual women and children?

This is a central question. I have no idea. If it was built by the Commonwealth as a sort of matter of course at the end of a different (failed) Severian's life to house his remains, then what is it doing in the necropolis when our Severian is a child? Again, I don't see why it would be there unless it was somehow dislocated in time, or time-travelers (those who walk the corridors of time that we are told on pg. 406 of Citadel manipulate Severian's second journey to the throne - I think this is Inire/hierodules, and possibly the undines as well) rebuilt it there. I think the mausoleum could have been put there by someone who intended Severian to find so that it would help shape his path and better prepare him for his trial so that he would bring the New Sun.

On Wed, Dec 18, 2013 at 10:33 PM, Michael Thayer <michael.o.thayer at gmail.com

wrote:

David Stockhoff: The mausoleum is the nexus of the various Severians, and it is he himself he might see if he looks over his shoulder.

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David Stockhoff — 20 Dec 2013, 02:12 · in reply to Michael Thayer

On 12/19/2013 8:38 PM, Michael Thayer wrote:

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Possibly.

David Stockhoff: I am not even sure the Severian of UNS is the same Severian as BNS, or that Severian really did pass the test in UNS.

I think a healthy skepticism about whether the narrators of UNS and BotNS are the same version of Severian is fair, but I don't know why you question whether he really did pass the test in UNS? I'm intrigued -- what makes you doubt that?

Well, it's not like they handed him a golden key, Oz-style. (I don't trust anyone in UNS.)

David Stockhoff: Who built the mausoleum? Severian? Typhon? Ymar?

Inire? Gene Wolfe? Was there ever a family who had those arms---one with actual women and children?

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I had forgotten about the three backward-travelers in time. They would be the ones in the best position to know how many coffins are needed and where to put them (assuming they are coffins). And remember Severian does describe "the dead man" in the mausoleum.

Also, if they are stored clones, then they would have to be shorter than the bar to be accepted into the Guild at the beginning of their careers. The coffins are full-size.

António Pedro Marques — 20 Dec 2013, 04:39 · in reply to David Stockhoff

No dia 19/12/2013, às 13:47, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> escreveu:

But where the Atrium is reached by traveling through an underworld, increasing the sense of temporal isolation, the mausoleum is a place Severian visits almost daily that seems well connected to the world by seasons and wildlife. It has a mood of sleepy stasis to it, but then it's Severian's "spirit home" in a way, where he has nothing to do but watch and wait. And of course he remembers everything he ever saw there.

The necropolis is after all guarded, though we see how poorly against a determined attack.

Yet, am I mistaken or no one else, besides Sev, ever drops by the mausoleum? Does any other character show any sign of knowing that the place even exists?

Jeff Wilson — 20 Dec 2013, 05:21 · in reply to Michael Thayer

I don't personally see how Severian would ever be a clone. He *is* an aquastor duplicate for two stretches of URTH's narrative, as demonstrated by the dead material bodies left behind. That could account for two of the closed coffins, the third might be from his drowning/not drowning at the opening of SHADOW. He records Juturna saving him, but perhaps she lifted his clinically dead body from the murk into the light where the White Fountain empowered his gift.

Aquastored - fall on Ship, killed by Stone Villagers

self-raised - avern duel and earthquake in the citadel, possibly drowning in Gyoll

please fill in any others, it's late here.

Also, the *family* mausoleum could be for his family members as well (Dorcas, Ouen, etc) and the face on the mausoleum could be Ouen's or another male relative's as well.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

Charles Gillingham — 20 Dec 2013, 08:16 · follows Jeff Wilson

This is my first time posting, so please correct me if this is stupid, and/or has been brought up before.

Central to what is in the coffins, which might be Severian's, is the power of the Claw, or more exactly the power of Severian. Why is it some "resurrect" right away, while the dead soldier took days, and some can't come back at all? I propose that Severian never bring anyone back from the dead, just sparks life into corpses. This is because of a built in system inside his own robot clone. This also explains his prefect memory, he's a robot.

Dorcas was in suspended animation. The soldier killed by the nocturnes had just died a moment before. Thus their brains were fresh, the networks of memory didn't need to be reconstructed. The dead soldier, Miles, had been dead for quite some dead. It took the new conscience that Severian gave it a while to assimilate its bodies memories.

Of course, sometimes a body is too damaged to repair and install a new mind. This is true of Severian's son Severian, and all the times Severian sees a dead body when he wakes up after death. At that point, one of the stored robot clones is brought back and activated by Severian via the Corridors of Time.

Thus, I propose, there are six Severian. The first being a human born of a mother, who may or may not have become Autarch, but does get access to the Corridors of Time. He constructs the five robot clones Severians, so he can gourd them into becoming Autarch's that will past Yesod's trail. The two Severians Severian talks about, are himself and the first robot clone attempt. Their two lives merge together, and make up the memories that are Book of the New Sun.

The Citadel of course is really just a starport. The mausoleum is really a robot storage facility. It doesn't matter who constructed it, but a Severian most certainly stocked it

Sorry if that was long winded, I have a lot of New Sun ideas!

David Stockhoff — 20 Dec 2013, 13:19 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

On 12/19/2013 11:39 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

No dia 19/12/2013, às 13:47, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> escreveu:

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I don't think so, but that is after all part of the attraction. There is certainly a subtext going on, but it's already been identified, more or less.

Since he uses no special "key" (i.e., no secret passage or spell or trick) to get in, if only he has access then he himself is the key, which would make Severian himself as magical as the hidden mausoleum. It's possible that only he can see it, but (a) there's no indication of or ready explanation for this, nor does anything like it ever happen again (though he is often visited by people no one else sees, but then he is always alone when this happens) (b) the wildlife find it easily enough (c) the Necropolis is a vast, ruined place where no one goes except apprentices, grave robbers, and funeral parties. Finally, there would be no purpose to it. The *plot* doesn't need Severian there alive, nor does it need the mausoleum to be a secret. We don't know how dead Severians get there anyway (or live clones get in or out) and this theory doesn't explain that.

Again, all Severians could be eidolons with no real physical limitations. But then the mausoleum itself becomes merely the dream of a ghost, and doesn't need time dislocation to rationalize its minor features.

Another point that just occurred to me. We do need to follow Occam's Razor. Therefore, ---Any theory that proposes something as complicated as, say, a laboratory hidden in time that has cloning and mind-control technology and that grows and programs cloned puppets to insert them into manipulated time streams is just too complicated.

---A coffin-corpse mausoleum theory only needs to explain how corpses get in. A clone-storage mausoleum theory needs to explain not only how they got in, but how they will get out. And besides, any mechanism that could do both probably would not need clone storage in the first place.

David Stockhoff — 20 Dec 2013, 14:16 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 12/20/2013 12:21 AM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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his clinically dead body from the murk into the light where the White Fountain empowered his gift.

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On the Ship, he clearly leaves his ruined body behind, so only that and the stoning should count as deaths. But since 5 is the Number of Man, it works best for there to be exactly four "real" deaths and for the final death to be transcended. I'm still not sure how to count them to get four---whether our Severian is #4 or he is #2 with bonus lives. Are aquastorized Severians and re-cycled Severians on the same level---are the coffins for murdered Severians or only for judged and discarded Severians?

A simpler idea than the Severian-iteration theory may be that the five coffins represent five chances for a single Severian. After all, what's the real difference between resurrecting him/letting him resurrect himself and starting him all over? Death is surely a lesser error than not passing the Test, but it's impossible to gauge how much effort is required from the puppetmasters for each level of intervention if they control all time and space.

Finally, if Ossipago, Famulimus, and Barbatus did build the mausoleum, knowing how many coffins were needed (give or take one), then the mausoleum would already be thematically associated not only with deep time but also with backwards time, i.e., premonition. And that's what Severian feels there, although not as explicitly as in the tunnels under the Atrium. But the mausoleum itself is traveling forward, not backward, and so the three occupied coffins are not lives to come but lives already expended. Our Severian must be the ultimate or penultimate one, or there is no point in telling his story.

Michael Thayer — 20 Dec 2013, 17:01 · follows David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff: It's possible that only he can see it, but . . . (b) the wildlife find it easily enough . . .

My reading is quite the contrary one. We are told that the wildlife cannot "hear" or "scent" Severian as he watches them through the mausoleum window, though some animals come "two cubits from [his] face." Shadow, 12.

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I agree with your method. The only question is whether a hidden clone laboratory dislocated in time is the simplest explanation. For instance, it would be a mistake to conclude that the Citadel is a traditional citadel rather than a spaceport just because the citadel is the simpler explanation of the two. In tBotnS, a castle tower is not a castle tower at all, but a space rocket. A poor traveler is not a poor traveler, but a marooned robot from the distant past with a human

face grafted onto his metallic body. A two-headed demonic monster is not a two-headed demonic monster, but a former intergalactic hegemon who has had his head surgically grafted onto another's body to extend his own biological viability. Witches (a witch at least, the Cumaen) and sirens (Juturna and the other undines) are not witches and sirens, but space aliens meddling in human affairs. A divine prophet from the past is not a divine prophet from the past, but a machine-projected time-traveler recently returned from beyond this solar system. The entire conceit of the novel is that the setting appears to be that of ancient myth and medieval high fantasy, but it is in fact a far future hyper-techno space age. In light of this, I think we should exercise caution in slicing away, Occam-style, the possibility that a mausoleum is something more than a mausoleum, especially where that mausoleum is imbued with such import and strangeness.

Paul Watson — 20 Dec 2013, 17:32 · in reply to Michael Thayer

De-lurking to say that I've been reading this thread and was playing around with two other theories about the mausoleum. I don't think they're right, but I'll put them out here for what they're worth:

First, it's a family mausoleum, but I can't get that one to fit (too many of Severian's relatives still alive during the BotNS to account for 2 open coffins).

The other theory is that - since mausolea were typically tombs for deceased leaders of importance, then the mausoleum is built for the bodies of those brave autarchs who chose to face the test on Yesod. Two coffins are open and unoccupied (Severian's and the current Autarch) because those two are still alive. Ymar was the last autarch before the current one to be tested, so his body is in one of the closed coffins, leaving two other Autarchs prior to Ymar who were tested and failed in the other 2 closed coffins.

Paul

On 20/12/13 17:01, Michael Thayer wrote:

David Stockhoff: It's possible that only he can see it, but . . .

(b) the wildlife find it easily enough . . .

My reading is quite the contrary one. We are told that the wildlife cannot "hear" or "scent" Severian as he watches them through the mausoleum window, though some animals come "two cubits from [his] face." Shadow, 12.

David Stockhoff: Another point that just occurred to me. We do need to follow Occam's Razor. Therefore,

---Any theory that proposes something as complicated as, say, a laboratory hidden in time that has cloning and mind-control technology and that grows and programs cloned puppets to insert them into manipulated time streams is just too complicated.

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David Stockhoff — 20 Dec 2013, 19:47 · in reply to Michael Thayer

On 12/20/2013 12:01 PM, Michael Thayer wrote:

David Stockhoff: It's possible that only he can see it, but . . .

(b) the wildlife find it easily enough . . .

My reading is quite the contrary one. We are told that the wildlife cannot "hear" or "scent" Severian as he watches them through the mausoleum window, though some animals come "two cubits from [his] face." Shadow, 12.

I actually don't think that is terribly remarkable---that's how blinds work. They can't see him if he doesn't move and Severian himself seems in a kind of stasis. But that is a good point.

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that the setting appears to be that of ancient myth and medieval high fantasy, but it is in fact a far future hyper-techno space age. In light of this, I think we should exercise caution in slicing away, Occam-style, the possibility that a mausoleum is something more than a mausoleum, especially where that mausoleum is imbued with such import and strangeness.

That's a very good point. There's no doubt that things are named in BNA according to what we might call their "essential" nature, not their "true" nature. Yes, the Citadel was a spaceport, and yes, the mausoleum could be other than a mausoleum. It could have been built as something else before there was a necropolis there. (It could have been the hut of Apu-Punchau.) The coffins could be other than coffins, although they are too large to be creches. Severian does not notice any difference between it and other buildings there, and it is described as a simple stone building:

Rather, it was the smallness of the room, the thick walls of masonry, and the single, narrow window with its one bar, together with the faithless door (so massively heavy) that remained eternally ajar.

But if it predated the necropolis, we need to explain why was it not desecrated, whether as a tomb or a cloning storage facility. Severian refers to it as "violated" and calls the three closed ones "intact" as though all five once contained corpses, a natural assumption that would not be subverted by the three-Sevs-out theory but that IS subverted by the three-Sevs-in theory.

And if it was not the first building, then why was it placed deep in a necropolis? Making it hidden certainly takes care of these problems, but if it is a hidden zone, it could have been hidden anywhere. It doesn't need to be isolated.

Moving on, why are the coffins made as bronze sarcophagi molded to Severian's features like those in medieval churches? That might be good camouflage against people fearing vampires (although they would be just as likely to think a sleeping clone a saint), but not against people who rob mausoleums. If the place is hidden to all but Severian, why are they disguised at all?

David Stockhoff — 20 Dec 2013, 19:50 · in reply to Paul Watson

On 12/20/2013 12:32 PM, Paul Watson wrote:

The other theory is that - since mausolea were typically tombs for deceased leaders of importance, then the mausoleum is built for the bodies of those brave autarchs who chose to face the test on Yesod. Two coffins are open and unoccupied (Severian's and the current Autarch) because those two are still alive. Ymar was the last autarch before the current one to be tested, so his body is in one of the closed coffins, leaving two other Autarchs prior to Ymar who were tested and failed in the other 2 closed coffins

That's possible. Severian can only see the features of one that is loose and that he cleaned, but does not mention the other one. The blazon could depict the arms of the Space Autarchs. It does actually fit the "family" aspect better than three bronze Severians.

Jeffery Wilson — 21 Dec 2013, 00:46 · in reply to Paul Watson

On 12/20/2013 11:32 AM, Paul Watson wrote:

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bodies of those brave autarchs who chose to face the test on Yesod. Two coffins are open and unoccupied (Severian's and the current Autarch) because those two are still alive. Ymar was the last autarch before the current one to be tested, so his body is in one of the closed coffins, leaving two other Autarchs prior to Ymar who were tested and failed in the other 2 closed coffins.

I'd always presumed that Ymar was the first autarch, since he was present at the end of Typhon's reign, but I just went over all mentions of his name in volumes I-V and it's not specified that he's the first autarch, just the first one given by name. In fact, Sev claims there are mental predecessors extending back into the Age of Myth, leading me to wonder what that could possibly mean since it's before the likely advent of the alzabo.

But while the mausoleum might have been inserted to symbolize the succession (which does definitely end with Sev in the same flood that slams the mausoleum door closed), I don't think anyone in the Commonwealth would have literally built it with respect for the persons of deceased Autarchs in mind, considering it's kind of chintzy for the numerous untried ones to get their own Rushmores just the same.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

David Stockhoff — 21 Dec 2013, 04:43 · in reply to Jeffery Wilson

On 12/20/2013 7:46 PM, Jeffery Wilson wrote:

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Well, considering the winner gets to be a god, it's not unreasonable to give them a bronze medal, so to speak. And perhaps it's for their own good to be interred someplace out of the way, though surely few Nessusites would give a damn either way. Inire could do it, as their friend and sponsor. But I think it's all unlikely.

António Pedro Marques — 23 Dec 2013, 10:55 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote (20-12-2013 13:19):

On 12/19/2013 11:39 PM, António Pedro Marques wrote:

No dia 19/12/2013, às 13:47, David Stockhoff<[dstockhoff at verizon.net](mailto:dstockhoff@verizon.net)> escreveu:

But where the Atrium is reached by traveling through an underworld, increasing the sense of temporal isolation, the mausoleum is a place Severian visits almost daily that seems well connected to the world by seasons and wildlife. It has a mood of sleepy stasis to it, but then it's Severian's "spirit home" in a way, where he has nothing to do but watch and wait. And of course he remembers everything he ever saw there.

The necropolis is after all guarded, though we see how poorly against a determined attack.

Yet, am I mistaken or no one else, besides Sev, ever drops by the mausoleum? Does any other character show any sign of knowing that the place even exists?

I don't think so, but that is after all part of the attraction. There is certainly a subtext going on, but it's already been identified, more or less.

Since he uses no special "key" (i.e., no secret passage or spell or trick) to get in, if only he has access then he himself is the key, which would make Severian himself as magical as the hidden mausoleum. It's possible that only he can see it, but

(a) there's no indication of or ready explanation for this, nor does anything like it ever happen again (though he is often visited by people no one else sees, but then he is always alone when this happens)

(b) the wildlife find it easily enough

(c) the Necropolis is a vast, ruined place where no one goes except apprentices, grave robbers, and funeral parties.

Finally, there would be no purpose to it. The *plot* doesn't need Severian there alive, nor does it need the mausoleum to be a secret. We don't know how dead Severians get there anyway (or live clones get in or out) and this theory doesn't explain that.

I was thinking rather along the lines that the mausoleum be somehow displaced from normal space/time, hence accessible only to one able to go such places.

Again, all Severians could be eidolons with no real physical limitations. But then the mausoleum itself becomes merely the dream of a ghost, and doesn't need time dislocation to rationalize its minor features.

Another point that just occurred to me. We do need to follow Occam's Razor.

Bwa-ha-ha-ha-ha!

Therefore,

---Any theory that proposes something as complicated as, say, a laboratory hidden in time that has cloning and mind-control technology and that grows and programs cloned puppets to insert them into manipulated time streams is just too complicated.

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Bingo.

My impression is that it serves some thematic or decorative, rather than plot, purpose.

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 23 Dec 2013, 20:49 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

"I was thinking rather along the lines that the mausoleum be somehow displaced from normal space/time, hence accessible only to one able to go such places."

Good point. These questions come to mind: Was Severian able to do this as a child, before the Gyll incident for example, or the Claw? Is he able to go sideways as well as forward/backward? Do such time-places exist in BNS?

"My impression is that it serves some thematic or decorative, rather than plot, purpose."

I agree. We just need to be able to figure out what is meant by it, which suggests its meaning should be pretty clear or else the symbol is wasted. It doesn't, by itself, demand five Severians, or predestination, or time travel, but in the light of 5HC and later clues, those things become definite and ought to be sufficient to solve the puzzle.

On Monday, December 23, 2013 2:43 PM, António Pedro Marques <antonio at gmail.com>

wrote:

David Stockhoff wrote (20-12-2013 13:19):

On 12/19/2013 11:39 PM, Ant?nio Pedro Marques wrote:

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Bingo.

My impression is that it serves some thematic or decorative, rather than plot, purpose.

Charles Gillingham — 24 Dec 2013, 09:07 · follows DAVID STOCKHOFF

I don't see why its necessary for the mausoleum to be out of time. If the "coffins" are suspended animation chambers for clones, then those that walk the Corridors of Time could activate a clone whenever they choose. It is important how many "coffins" are open, just because in Severian's current liner time, only another clone is active. This means the other's of himself he meets are from other coffins, but only opened after he saw them as a child.

The reason the mausoleum isn't molested is simple: the Autarch is in on the Severian scheme. Autarch set up a secret guard on the mausoleum to keep everyone but child Severian, or quantum Severian, out. He, like everyone else, was manipulating Severian from childhood, he was just as in on Severian eating Thecla as Votalus was. Severian visited the Autarch's brothel after Thecla was taken, but before she committed suicide. So he lied later in Citadel about not knowing she was captive. This all shows the Autarch was always aware of what was transpiring in the necropolis, and guarded it from interlopers.

Lee — 24 Dec 2013, 14:21 · follows Charles Gillingham

Antonio Pedro Marques: My impression is that it serves some thematic or decorative, rather than plot, purpose.

I can agree somewhat, while recognizing that speculation on specifics is part of the fun of participating on this board for many of us.

Wolfe has stated that there are mysteries in his work for which there is no intended answer provided. To the most science-minded, this begs the question- "Then why put it in?"

But for the more literary minded, there is an understanding that in the arts there can be the intention of reaching past logic and reason and making an appeal directly to the sub-conscious or emotional level of the reader. Sometimes it is the question not the answer which has the meaning.

Given the subliminal emotional content which may be found in mausoleums, coffins and family crests, it may have been Wolfe's only intention with this section to appeal to the part of his reader's psyche which responds to such imagery.

On the other hand, as I mentioned in another post, at the end of RTTW, the characters not only visit Urth and Severian, they visit a mausoleum in the necropolis. I suppose it could be explained as purely decorative bookends for 12 volume series.

But I find this RTTW episode to be a personal message from Wolfe that there is significant, previously unsolved meaning to Severian's mausoleum, much as UotNS provides us a Ship, an Angel and a Flood to explain previously unsolved hints in the first four books.

Sergei SOLOVIEV — 24 Dec 2013, 19:26 · in reply to António Pedro Marques

Just a remark:

what David says is not exactly so:

(a) (though he is often visited by people no

one else sees, but then he is always alone when this happens)

Remember the scene from "Return to the Whorl" when Horn/Silk visit the "Red Sun Whorl" and the Tower - Horn/Silk touches Master Gurloes who wants to punish Severian?

Merry Christmas -

Sergei