

Palaemon as Severian0

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mary whalen — 02 Jul 1998, 18:19

This is Sean Whalen (prion).

I was thinking about how Palaemon may be Gene Wolfe's original concept for how the story of Sev would go (The Feast of St. Catherine). Well, the original Palaemon in mythology was the name of two characters: the first name of Hercules and the second name of Melicertes. Melicertes was thrown into the water as a boy, and either drowned or was saved by a dolphin, but either way was then made a sea god. His mother drowned and became the goddess Leukothea (White Goddess). This seems quite a bit like what happens to the Severian we know. Also, Melicertes means beekeeper, any relation to the Honey Steward who became Autarch? Does Leukothea relate to Catherine being like Katharine, who was killed on the wheel and became a saint?

There's some circular connections in the naming of Hercules and Melicertes, too. Some people think Melicertes is just a corruption of the Canaanite name Melkarth/Melquart, the equivalent of Hercules in Canaan. Melkarth means lord of the city.

Now, some free-association with Palaemon. Palaimon is Greek for wrestler. Palaistra was a wrestling school or educational school (palaestra!). Palaemon was in charge of education at the guild. Palaios means old, and he's old. Palin means back again or again, signifying his return to the guild after exile and him being an analog of Severian.

There seems to be a lot of association here. I may as well make one other speculation: could Palaemon be Severian's maternal grandfather?

prion