

Regency Plot 2

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 10 Jul 1998

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m.driussi — 10 Jul 1998, 17:42

Whoops--Eata says that some of the gold coins had Severian's face and some had Valeria's face, "or anyway some woman's."

(So it wasn't two faces on one coin as I misremembered; and the fuzzy face wasn't "some man's," i.e., Dux Caesidus's.)

This detail sparks other associations: for the current inquiry we will assume that the coins have Valeria's face. However, the mysterious coin of TBOTNS, which had a womanly face on it from a model never really identified, a coin given by Vodalus to Severian, turned out to be a fake coin. Who was the model? (People seem to assume that it is the old Autarch, unmanned and androgynous. Personally I think it is more likely to be Tzadkiel.) Are all "woman faced" coins therefore assumed to be counterfeit, or are they just based upon the coins minted by the self-effacing old Autarch? (Seeing how much trouble Severian's portraiture causes, in Typhon's era as well as after the Deluge, one can openly applaud the old Autarch's strategy!) And does the fake coin somehow point toward Valeria's (future) counterfeiting <boggle>?

Anyway, applying details from "The Map" to Eata's tale in URTH, we find that "The Map" must be taking place in 8 S.R. or 9 S.R., since Severian is Autarch and "the law" (i.e., he hasn't left Urth yet, which happens in 10 S.R.), Maxellindis is dead (so presumably Eata has already been arrested, served on the ship, jumped ship in Xanthic Lands, spent two years there, then returned to the Commonwealth; since Maxellindis drowned avoiding the arrest), Severian's face is on newly minted silver coins.

Since Eata's tale is being shaped by Severian's prompting, let alone his recording, it is as unreliable as ever. But if we take the low numbers he gives, then Eata could have returned to the Commonwealth by 8 S.R. Making it a lie that Severian was gone when Eata returned.

And who knows how quickly Valeria remarried? It may be that Severian's subconscious mind wants to paint her black after her assassination/execution, as if to justify to himself his own unconscious part. So Eata's tale makes it seem as if she only waited a year, or maybe two, before seizing power and then elevating her lover to consort.

It might have been five years, or ten years, or twenty years. Who knows? These amounts of time might mitigate, might soften the judgment against Valeria. But to the heart, they don't really matter--the crime was committed (women who wound Severian's heart =die=). So the two guys talking cobble together a scenario wherein it looks like practically the day after Severian left, his wife made her VictoriEvita coup, and then the next week married her Fabio consort, while Inire pushed up daisies or wrung his wrinkled little hands.

=mantis=

Mark Millman — 10 Jul 1998, 14:53 · follows m.driussi

On 10 July 1998 at 5:42 pm GMT mantis sez:

Anyway, applying details from "The Map" to Eata's tale in URTH, we find that "The Map" must be taking place in 8 S.R. or 9 S.R., since Severian is Autarch and "the law" (i.e., he hasn't left Urth yet, which happens in 10 S.R.), Maxellindis is dead (so presumably Eata has already been arrested, served on the ship, jumped ship in Xanthic Lands, spent two years there, then returned to the Commonwealth; since Maxellindis drowned avoiding the arrest), Severian's face is on newly minted silver coins.

But a close reading of "The Map" will convince you that it's set immediately after Maxellindis' death; in fact, the corpse that Eata fishes out of Gyoll with his boat-hook doesn't make him cry because it reminds him of her; it makes him cry because it is her.

I think that Eata's story in _Urth_ is the story as he has convinced himself it should be. Maxellindis, in Eata's version of events, wasn't unfaithful to him and didn't betray him, and, perhaps most importantly, wasn't casually killed by her lover right after the theft of the map.

This suggests that Eata could indeed have returned from the Xanthic Lands after Severian's departure (in fact, I believe that Eata leaves soon after this very episode; his rejection of the steady job is suggestive), though it doesn't mean that Severian couldn't have interpreted the story that Eata in fact tells in such a way as to convince himself that Eata returned before Severian's own departure. And it doesn't in any way invalidate your conclusion, mantis. Indeed, if any- thing, I'd say it strengthens it, since it introduces a parallel situation, i.e.,

Valeria : Severian :: Maxellindis : Eata.

Though I would like to know something more about the relative timing of the composition of _Urth_ and of "The Map".

Mark Millman