

Mud for AEther

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 06 Aug 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/132>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

m.driussi — 06 Aug 1997, 16:49

alga,

Back to the story "Tracking Song." Re: what is humanity; as you glancingly noted, there are clues that the Great Sleighers are not mere humans such as ourselves at all, rather they are idealized humans, or "angels" or hierodules of TBOTNS. People of aether. If this is true, then Mantru really is the last of the old humans (people of clay), taking on the role of the Autarch in the play "Eschatology and Genesis," trying to hold back the arrival of the new day or, failing that, to subvert it for his own goals, not the least of which is the difficult-to-condemn survival of his (our) species. And Cutthroat is an avatar of the Green Man, pointing towards a New Jerusalem where sustenance will not require bloodshed.

(Whoops, I botched the punning in the last message. White ration cubes as both "bouillon," treasure of the cupboard, and "bullion," treasures of the underworld. And communion, too.)

The terraforming of the ice age world is a nice and simple analogy for the whole white fountain/new sun process. Since Wolfe is so fond of starships with reflective sails and starships that sail on water as well (FIFTH HEAD, etc.), I'd guess that the mirror in geostationary orbit is made up of sails from the ship now crawling across the ice.

Still, circumnavigation of a sphere in twenty days at a rate of walking speed? Hmmm. Well, let's say 5 mph, 24 hours a day . . . that's only 120 miles/day. Try 10 mph. That only doubles it to 240 miles per day, times 20 days is only 4,800 miles circumference, which implies a world with a diameter of 1,529 miles . . . smaller than Luna. Oh, I don't know . . . maybe they go really fast at night?

(Hey, speaking of miles vs. kilometers, Peter Wright and I have this difference of interpretation for the next story, "The Toy Theater," which largely boils down to the unanswerable question of which measuring system is being used! Since I favor the "metric" answer, I'm happy to note the other stories in the collection that use the metric system.)

(Aside from TBOTNS this is looking more and more like John Crowley's THE DEEP crossed with ENGINE SUMMER with sprinkles of BEASTS; springing from a similar river, I suppose, since I don't know that Wolfe has read any John Crowley aside from LITTLE, BIG, which he heartily endorsed.)

So it might really be the funeral of humankind (especially with death of Mantru) and the dawn of a new day wherein one or more of the beastman groups will fill the vacuum and assume the role of "humankind."

=mantis=