

Zoetics

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 26 Feb 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1397>

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Dan Parmenter — 26 Feb 1999, 13:37

From: CRCulver at aol.com

The Salamander, according to ancient Greek belief, could survive in fire.

Jorge Luis Borges, in *_El Libro de Seres Imaginarios_* (The Book of Imaginary Beings), wrote an article on the Salamander and Wolfe took it, like many of Borges' creatures (Baldanders, etc.) for the BotNS.

But my point was this: Kevin Maroney put forth the following hypothesis:

(Remember that most/all of the animal species of Urth except humans were driven extinct at some point in the past, and the animals present in the Book are alien replacements which approximate the original species. Destriers aren't horses, they're alien horse-like beings.

So the idea here is:

Alzabo - replacement for hyenas (I have my doubts about this, but...) Destrier - replacement for horses

Now you'll notice that by this hypothesis the replacement animals do not have the same names as the originals. What then, are we to make of references in the text to animals that **do** have the original names, e.g. dogs. I suggested that according to the Wolfean Naming Convention (put forth in CASTLE OF THE OTTER I believe) of "everything is exactly what it says it is" and so perhaps, if the text refers to a "dog" we should assume that this is indeed a dog (a rather large one). Now, given these observations, what then are we to make of the Salamander being called a Salamander? Obviously it's not a Salamander as we know it, rather it seems to partake of the "mythic" or Borgesian Salamander. This observation suggests that perhaps the Wolfean Naming Convention, at least as I have applied it, may not actually hold, at least not in the strict sense that I am suggesting here.

So the basic question then is this: what animals other than humans (if any) are still around? We are told that the Beast-Handlers take a sow in marriage (though I have argued in the past that this might just be a misinterpretation by the uneducated people of Severian's time of the term "animal husbandry"), and so what is this sow?

D

Kevin J. Maroney — 26 Feb 1999, 19:14 · follows Dan Parmenter

At 01:37 PM 2/26/99 -0800, you wrote:

Alzabo - replacement for hyenas (I have my doubts about this, but...)

Wolfe has explicitly stated that the Alzabo was the replacement for the hyena because it was an animal that laughed. I don't remember if this was in *_Castle of the Otter_* or in some other work.

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"dog" we should assume that this is indeed a dog (a rather large one).

Difficult question: Are the rats in the library actually "writing", or is this a metaphor? If the former, they are no longer terrestrial rats; if the latter, "everything is exactly what it says it is" doesn't hold.

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