

Aquastors, eidolons

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 17 Apr 1997

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Charles Dye — 17 Apr 1997, 19:04

This is mantis, speaking to the Whorl list. I've moved it over to Urth for no better reason than that I'm more familiar with that work:

Whoops--in my previous message, "coo coup/fish & fowl," I used the word "eidolon" when I should have used "aquastor" (even though I think that they might be used interchangeably by the commonality of the Commonwealth, for my own sense of mental cohesion I like to keep them separate: "eidolon" as beam-to-the-brain ghost, and "aquastor" as physically manifested ghost of hologrammic silvery dust).

I tried to make this distinction myself once, and I came away with the impression that "aquastor" and "eidolon" were two words for the same technology, or perhaps just slightly different implementations. I don't have the reference here, but I definitely recall Barbatus using the word "tangible" to describe eidolons. There's certainly room for disagreement on this, but my interpretation is that aquastors or eidolons are manufactured from locally available matter, held together for a time by sheer force of mechanical will, and revert (usually!) to the original material when the mind's control lapses.

The material used to construct aquastors should be finely divisible, readily available, and ideally should have interesting electrical properties.

[Since "quaesitor" in early Roman times was a criminal investigator (mainly homicide, I think), I continue to wonder if "aquastors" are ghost detectives--that is, investigators of the living on behalf of the dead. Or there are the "quaestors," deputies of magistrates, that grew through the years of the Republic from a population of two to forty until Augustus reduced them to twenty: this job was the entry-level magistracy sought by ambitious young men. In context of "aquastor" this suggests a hierarchy and government of the dead.]

This is so poetic, and so nicely reasoned, that it hurts me almost physically to disagree. But ... Michael, I think you've outwitted Wolfe on this one! Aquastors dissolve to mist when released. If you read "mist" literally instead of as a bit of poetic description, you get a much simpler (but less beautiful) derivation for the word "aquastor."

raster at highfiber.com

("Mental cohesion?" Punintentional?)

m.driussi — 18 Apr 1997, 04:49 · follows Charles Dye

Reply: Item #7172613 from RASTER at HIGHFIBER.COM@INET#

Raster,

First of all, we both agree that the words seem to be used interchangeably as a synonym for

"phantom." And I'll bet I can get you to agree that the originating mind can be organic as well as non-organic ("mechanical" is not quite right, since even our puny present thinking engines aren't mechanical in nature), so we agree there, too. (Next: grappling with the idea that the range of these phantom projecting deus ex machinas is measured in =time= rather than =space=.) As for aquastors being made of water, that's in the Lexicon, but, somehow unsatisfied, I continue to poke around for other layers. (I think Gene Wolfe once mentioned that they were like tulpas--see short story "Melting"--which makes perfect sense. But they aren't called "tulpas," they are called "aquastors," and he doesn't usually make up words. Or so I've been led to believe. <g>)

The bit of Barbatus talking is probably from within the pyramid in URTH, where Severian is =finally= coming to grips with the idea that he died back at the beginning of the novel. Another part is where aged Eata says he thinks the Severian before him is a ghost.

However, for my pointers I took precedence within the text: and the aquastor definition is given in CITADEL on the ride from behind enemy lines to the beach, I believe. In Cyriaca's charming sketch of posthistory, she tells of a time when ghosts that nobody else could see were beamed into people's heads directly as guardian angels--thus, something different from the solidified hologram being assigned to "aquastor."

(Did you catch this a few months ago as a new science factoid: I'm fuzzy on the details, but it seemed to be just that--a solid-o-gram projector that spits individual atoms into place, not only negating the need for mist/smoke that a hologram needs to be cast upon, but also making an ersatz shell 3-D form. I must be garbling an awful lot but I'm not making it out of . . . water . . .)

Back to Barbatus: without the text in front of me, I think you are right in the sense that B is (maybe) saying that an eidolon can become an aquastor, and that a sufficiently powered aquastor can gain more and more substance until it is as independent and as real as humans are. (Kinda like the phantom warriors of Barsoom, if you recall.)

In psychic terms they're made of ectoplasm!

Re: Mysteries of PEACE, when I asked if Ms. Gold had an accident I meant was she killed, and if so, was it because she was pregnant.

=mantis=