

Tracking dust

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 10 Aug 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/143>

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m.driussi — 10 Aug 1997, 17:12

Reply: Item #0925298 from URTN at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET03#

alga,

Re: dreams, I got what you got, maybe less.

Re: Sleigh vs. Cave, as Nutria pointed out (and maybe you did too), Cutthroat first feels closer to the Sleigh deep in the cave. Interesting. So at what point does his feeling change?

At first he seems to think that the buildings have no walls because the climate is so uniform and comfortable, then he realizes the walls have been stripped (like the outer layers of the Egyptian pyramids) to make a new, smaller scale structure (pyramid salvage was used to build the modern city). Is this the point, or is it later, during the interview or the test?

The Evil Staff. Again, it reminds me of the avern, the way it comes to life and actively tries to kill. But now I notice that Terminus Est also acts alive, shifting when lifted, leaning when lowered. I was going to contrast them as two artifacts, the one the magic boon, the other a cursed thing . . . but at the moment I'm caught by how very similar they are.

Likewise the "coldness" and "life-power drawing away" quality of the evil staff finds an unexpected analog in the Claw of the Conciliator, which, after all, causes Severian to feel cold whenever it performs its little tricks because it is feeding off his bodily essence in a most vampiric way (like Stormbringer, to touch back on the Moorcock thread). So maybe the duel is more properly a vril-o-meter; like two boys with lit cigarettes, say, each holding the ember of his cigarette into his own arm--the loser being he who pulls back first.

In the case of Severian, he loaths the avern yet cherishes Terminus Est, mourning its loss (that whole "stripping of the hero" thing); and he never considers the Claw to be an evil artifact to be thrown away (though it is true he tries to give it back and ends up sneaking it back). Then there is the analeptic alzado--first seen as a shameful perversion, in the end a nearly sacred communion of autarchy (while even more grisly and horrifying).

With Cutthroat, again I see the Lindsay mode where each new region offers new organs, new weapons, new passions, which are used in the region and then abandoned or atrophied by the time the hero gets to the next region. The only artifact that Cutthroat keeps is the tape recorder--good thing! But he fails to find the note left by Cim--something that Latro might not have done.

The evil staff gives Cutthroat impulses and dreams of domination, a perception that distinguishes between ruler and subject (apparently somewhat akin to seeing a difference between human and animal; close to "human and subhuman"). So he chucks it, seeing as how

he's bent on establishing a vegetarian democracy where the lion lies down with the lamb (and the farmer sleeps in the cornfield <g>). (And the corn swears off eating fish <g>.) (And the fish acknowledges that plankton are animals, too <g>.)

In contrast the Claw gives Severian visions of all sorts of sky blue nice and happy things, helping him cure a cute kid here, an animal there, glossing over the fact that the New Sun =will= destroy Urth in a non-metaphorical way (he--llooo, Elric! <g>) involving unprecedented megadeath, not unlike the extinction of the dinosaurs by the killer meteor.

=mantis=

Jim Jordan — 10 Aug 1997, 22:43 · follows m.driussi

Mantis writes:

The Evil Staff. Again, it reminds me of the avern, the way it comes to life and actively tries to kill. But now I notice that Terminus Est also acts alive, shifting when lifted, leaning when lowered. I was going to contrast them as two artifacts, the one the magic boon, the other a cursed thing . . . but at the moment I'm caught by how very similar they are.

Isn't the explanation for Terminus Est that it contains a liquid metal (mercury?) that causes it to be lighter when raised, and to come down hard? Perhaps it is analogous to being alive, but alive? Correct me if I'm wrong.

Likewise the "coldness" and "life-power drawing away" quality of the evil staff finds an unexpected analog in the Claw of the Conciliator, which, after all, causes Severian to feel cold whenever it performs its little tricks because it is feeding off his bodily essence in a most vampiric way

Well, perhaps better is Mark 5:30, where Jesus feels power leave Him when the unclean woman touches the wing of His garment.

Nutria