

Of Cacogens and Carnifexes (Carnifices?)

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 11 Nov 1999

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Jim Henley — 11 Nov 1999, 23:04

Joy at last came to Casa High Clearing yesterday in the form of my belated birthday copy of the Lexicon. Suffice to say I'm enjoying it hugely, but a couple of etymologies are not in there that I wanted to offer up.

First "cacogen." Okay, filthy born. Right. Got that. But has anyone suggested "shit-spewer" or even bullshitter? If we read it as being of the same form as pathogen we get "causer or creator or producer of ordure" - cacogenesis would be the process itself. (And what a lovely process it is!) From there it's just a quick jaunt to the demotic, fueled by the resentment for extrasolarians. And what do people resent? That the cacogens keep whispering in the Autarch's ear, no doubt feeding him a line of crap to get him to do what they want.

Seems like "cacogen" becomes a genuinely insulting thing to say about someone.

Carnifex - wouldn't this simply be "meat maker?" A pretty direct characterization of an executioner's function - you could see it maybe appearing on their vision statements. Then if there were an unheated prison where, one winter, an inmate was pressed into the role of acting headsman in the absence of an official functionary, the poor fellow would be a chilly con carnifex.

<runs like hell>

Best,

Jim

"What fades in time Costello/
will hurt much more" Bacharach, "My Thief"