

Soldier: Oior and Drakaina

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 21 Sep 1997

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Alice Turner — 21 Sep 1997, 14:22

I've just been reading Soldier of the Mist again, and I've got a couple of questions:

1) I don't quite understand the role of Oior. He is the Scythian mercenary (son of Scoloti) bowman attached to Hypereides who goes to considerable trouble to form an alliance with Latro---he says to protect himself from these alien gods. He says one of the other bowman is a Neuri, who seem to be like werewolves preying on the recently dead. He saves Latro's life from (presumably) this person (Spu) and extracts a blood oath from him. He turns up again in the last chapter, ravening over Drakaina's body---he is the Neuri himself, of course; there were at least two clues to this fact earlier, the Spu burial and something to do with his eyes. I presume he is also the "wolf" that dug up the grave of the dead woman (Thygater) brought back to life. My question is---why is he such a big deal? Why is he mentioned in the prophecy, and why does Kore emphasize that he must be killed? Is the test between the blood oath and loyalty to the gods? If so, it doesn't seem much of a test since a) Oior is offstage most of the time, b) Latro doesn't really remember his oath, c) Kore is right there on the scene. Or is he just alien magic and bad news that the gods want removed? Or is it that he belongs to the Great Mother who is at odds with Kore, and this her Kore's way of claiming Latro for her side? Apollo predicted it--where does that put him?

2) I don't quite get the metamorphosis of Eurykles into Drakaina/Medea. When Io says she turned Eurykles into herself (rather than him getting his heart's desire) she is right, since Io, like Oreb, is always right. But, since Latro saw Eurykles as a shade at Drakaina's seance at Acheron, we have to presume that the old body is dead. Why then, does the dying Drakaina identify her/himself as Eurykles? If it's just because the snake (Medea) has left the body, it seems rather a cheat for us to have seen the shade.

(Someone could have some scholarly fun with the role and symbolism of the snake in the New Sun, Short Sun and Soldier books!)

BTW, though demons are rather a specialty of mine, I've never run across the Neuri anywhere else, and they're not in my references, including the Herodotus index. Anyone else encounter them elsewhere?

-alga-