

# Jungle Garden

The Urth list — 14 messages, 9 voices, 15 Apr 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3938>

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 15 Apr 2003, 16:35

Forgive me if this has already been done, but ...

I recall a while back there was an argument that the Jungle Garden scene was connected somehow to the South America of roughly-our-time. In fact, it must be Africa, because Isangoma -- or iSangoma or isaNngoma -- is a Zulu title for a diviner. Among the references available on the Web ...

<http://www.smom-za.org/bbg/tradheal.htm> [http://www.tribalonline.com/culture\\_diviner.asp](http://www.tribalonline.com/culture_diviner.asp)  
[http://agriculture.kzntl.gov.za/scientific\\_publications/medicinal\\_plants/index.asp](http://agriculture.kzntl.gov.za/scientific_publications/medicinal_plants/index.asp)

This would seem to explain why he can see what Robert and Marie cannot ("Death and the Maiden" ... who is not, of course, a maiden, but then, Severian is not exactly Death).

Okay, so ... we've got a pair of French missionaries working with a Zulu diviner, which puts us in South Africa. Given the mail plane, this seems to place Robert, Marie and Isangoma, with a fairly high probability, in the second quarter of the 20th century, yes? No? But by that time the Dutch and English had permeated South Africa so thoroughly that it's hard to understand how Isangoma can \_not\_ be more aware of their beliefs than he seems to be. (The conquered tend to learn a lot more about the conquerors than the latter do about the former.) So I'm thinking that they don't come from the "real" South Africa at all, but from the South Africa of jungle movies. Nobody seems quite to have located any movie that could be a "source" for them, but that doesn't seem to me a problem -- after all, when the Frankenstein story replays itself in the time of the New Sun, it does so without the names, and in a way that resembles, generically, the movies rather than the book. So it seems that, in the mythic period of the New Sun, which Wolfe refers to as "posthistory" (possibly implying a relationship to postmodernism and the discourse referred to as "the end of history"), the stories play themselves out in generic form, welling perhaps from the popular un/consciousness and media rather than respecting the intellectual "purity" of their sources (again a fairly postmodernist approach).

I don't know where to go from there with this, but thought it was kind of interesting.

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Che Monro — 16 Apr 2003, 00:11 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Nobody seems quite to have located any movie that could be a "source" for them, but that doesn't seem to me a problem -- after all, when the Frankenstein story replays itself in the time of the New Sun, it does so without the names, and in a way that resembles, generically, the movies rather than the book. So it seems that, in the mythic period of the New Sun, which Wolfe refers to as "posthistory" (possibly implying a relationship to postmodernism and the discourse referred to as "the end of history"), the stories play themselves out in generic form, welling perhaps from the popular un/consciousness and media rather than respecting the intellectual "purity" of their sources (again a fairly postmodernist

approach).

This seems very Wolfean in style. \*nodnods\*

On a completely tangential matter: Severian's reaction to the aeroplane seems to indicate or at least imply that winged fliers are unknown in his era. If true, then this seems interesting because it implies a couple of things:

1. Maybe "antigravity" is so cheap and easy in this era that wings are utterly obsolete. If it's very easy to make something float then you don't need wings, but if you only have a powerful engine of some kind, be it piston, jet, rocket or "impulse drive", then wings are a simple, logical and efficient thing to have in an atmosphere. So it seems likely that whatever the secret of anti-gravity might be in Severian's era it is something simpler than constructing an internal combustion engine. I'm reminded of the shells Dr Taltos provided to the lake people for some reason.

2. Possibly they have powerful engines of some kinds, but the idea of powered flight has been erased by thousands of years of lighter than air (anti gravity) flight. Thus for someone re-inventing flight in this era a balloon would be the natural model, as seen with the flying tent of the Pelarines, which was quoted by someone recently. They might have a piston on jet engine, but they wouldn't see the -connection- between that and flight, since it doesn't float. Random Observation: Wolfe likes balloons/zeppelins, doesn't he? Note the airship in TBOTLS.

Che

Ché Franz Joseph Monroe -- <http://www.chemonro.com>  
che at chemonro.com -- flirt at technologist.com

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Josh Geller — 16 Apr 2003, 01:05 · follows Che Monroe

On Wed, 16 Apr 2003, Che Monroe wrote:

On a completely tangential matter: Severian's reaction to the aeroplane seems to indicate or at least imply that winged fliers are unknown in his era.

They use lifting bodies.

Severian says this explicitly.

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 16 Apr 2003, 03:34 · follows Josh Geller

Che,

Thanks for the kind words about my theorizing.

On a completely tangential matter: Severian's reaction to the aeroplane seems to indicate or at least imply that winged fliers are unknown in his era. If true, then this seems interesting because it implies a couple of things:

1. Maybe "antigravity" is so cheap and easy in this era that wings are utterly obsolete. 2. Possibly they have powerful engines of some kinds, but the idea of powered flight has been erased by thousands of years of lighter than air (anti gravity) flight.

Or (3) Severian is accustomed to "lifting body" style "fliers."

SHADOW, ch. XXI (pp.191-2 in my Timescape h/c):  
Into view came the strangest flier I have ever seen.  
It was winged, as if it had been built by some race  
that had not yet realized that since it would not  
flap its wings like a bird in any case, there was  
no reason its lift, like a kite's, could not come  
from its hull.

Gawsh, I love being able to do my email at home, where I have my reference materials around me...

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Andy Robertson — 16 Apr 2003, 06:15 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

They use lifting bodies: Severian comments on it somewhere, how this strange flier with wings was built by someone who didn't realise he could simply shape the entire craft

----- Original Message -----

From: "Che Monro" <flirt at technologist.com>

On a completely tangential matter: Severian's reaction to the aeroplane seems to indicate or at least imply that winged fliers are unknown in his era.

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Yves Meynard — 17 Apr 2003, 00:42 · follows Andy Robertson

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes writes:

I recall a while back there was an argument that the Jungle Garden scene was connected somehow to the South America of roughly-our-time. In fact, it must be Africa, because Isangoma -- or iSangoma or isaNngoma -- is a Zulu title for a diviner.

OK, but what about when Isangoma says:

"[The Proud One's] breath is the mist that hides the infant uakaris from the claws of the margay!"

(p.160 in my Pocket edition of \_Shadow\_)

From <http://ds.dial.pipex.com/agarman/margay.htm> :

The Margay, also known as the Long Tailed Spotted Cat, is similar in appearance to the Ocelot - its body however is smaller, growing up to 25-27 inches and in comparison with the Ocelot, the margay displays longer legs and tail.

The range of the margay extends from Mexico down through Peru, parts of Paraguay to the northern areas of Argentina.

From <http://www.animalinfo.org/species/primate/cacacalv.htm> :

The red uakari is a medium-sized monkey weighing about 4 kg (9 lb). [...] The red uakari is found in flooded swamp forests of Amazonia in Brazil, Colombia and Peru.

From <http://www.animalinfo.org/species/primate/cacamela.htm> : The black uakari is found in the northern Amazon basin in Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela.

This seems to point rather strongly to a South-American context.

Still, as Dan'l writes:

So I'm thinking that they don't come from the "real"  
South Africa at all, but from the South Africa of jungle movies.

Or more generally speaking, from the jungle country of jungle movies, that obscenely fecund, oppressively green realm that seems firmly rooted in our 20th-century subconscious, without any need for external validation -- or consistency.

Yves Meynard

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Josh Geller — 17 Apr 2003, 00:49 · follows Yves Meynard

On Wed, 16 Apr 2003, Yves Meynard wrote:  
Dan'l Danehy-Oakes writes:

I recall a while back there was an argument that the Jungle Garden scene was connected somehow to the South America of roughly-our-time. In fact, it must be Africa, because Isangoma -- or iSangoma or isaNngoma -- is a Zulu title for a diviner.

"Must" is a strong word.

OK, but what about when Isangoma says:

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From <http://www.animalinfo.org/species/primate/cacacalv.htm> :

The red uakari is a medium-sized monkey weighing about 4 kg (9 lb). [=85]  
The red uakari is found in flooded swamp forests of Amazonia in Brazil, Colombia and Peru.

[....]

It is obviously South America.

It is true, Isangoma means what y'all are saying in Zulu.

Maybe it means something else in some south American Indian language.

Hell, maybe it means the same thing in some south American Indian language.

=2E

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James Wynn — 17 Apr 2003, 01:03 · follows Josh Geller

Josh rather petulantly argues:

It is obviously South America. It is true, Isangoma means what y'all are saying in Zulu. Maybe it means something else in some south American Indian language. Hell, maybe it means the same thing in some south American Indian language.

Crush responds:

That's a bit of a reach. If you want to go there then \*maybe\* "margay" and "uakari" mean something else in Zulu.

-- Crush

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Josh Geller — 17 Apr 2003, 01:36 · follows James Wynn

On Wed, 16 Apr 2003, James Wynn wrote:

Josh Geller wrote:

It is obviously South America. It is true, Isangoma means what y'all are saying in Zulu. Maybe it means something else in some south American Indian language. Hell, maybe it means the same thing in some south American Indian language.

That's a bit of a reach. If you want to go there then \*maybe\* "margay" and "uakari" mean something else in Zulu.

Perhaps.

What is the terrain like, in kwaZulu-Natal? Does it resemble the tropical jungle of the scene in 'The Jungle Garden'?

Do Zulus use arrow poison? For that matter, do they use bows and arrows to any great extent?

In the early twentieth century, what religion might the average Zulu be expected to profess?

What was the extent of European civilization in kwaZulu-Natal in the early 20th century?

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matthew.malthouse — 17 Apr 2003, 07:41 · follows Josh Geller

On 17/04/2003 01:49:21 Josh Geller wrote:

On Wed, 16 Apr 2003, Yves Meynard wrote:

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes writes:

I recall a while back there was an argument that the Jungle Garden scene was connected somehow to the South America of roughly-our-time. In fact, it must be Africa, because Isangoma -- or iSangoma or isaNngoma -- is a Zulu title for a diviner.

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From <http://www.animalinfo.org/species/primate/cacacalv.htm> :

The red uakari is a medium-sized monkey weighing about 4 kg (9 lb). [?]

The red uakari is found in flooded swamp forests of Amazonia in Brazil, Colombia and Peru.

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It is true, Isangoma means what y'all are saying in Zulu.

Maybe it means something else in some south American Indian language.

Hell, maybe it means the same thing in some south American Indian language.

What is the purpose of the gardens and what are they, in physical terms?

We are told that they were created by Father Inire which might lead us to think of some magical/technological solution; perhaps they might be excursions into a real but distant past.

Yet the replanting and refurbishment of the sand garden strongly suggests otherwise. Actually constructing something would appear to preclude the possibility that the physical reality of the gardens lies beyond the time or dimension of Severian's contemporary Nessus.

If Father Inire's plans have a purpose, or several purposes for the gardens then it seems reasonable to use materials at hand to achieve it. An "Africa" populated with South American animals is logical enough if the aim is to create a scene that is an image of Africa on the surface for some deeper reason. Immediate plausibility would be far more significant than historical accuracy.

More many seem to place the Commonwealth on that continent we know as South America. The fauna might well be more available than anything African in origin.

All this is separate to the effect the gardens have on those who wander them. Tardis like they seem of far larger size than could be accommodated by the dome that houses them. The affinity that some people have for some gardens is mentioned and we see Severian spending far longer than he thought in them. My guess on reading was that there was something designed to attract people so strongly that they would populate the gardens where appropriate even to playing the roles such as we see in the jungle garden. Somewhat metaphysical perhaps but not I think implausible.

This still leaves unanswered - and I freely admit I have no clear ideas here - the question about their purpose, the purpose intended by the builder within the narrative and the purpose of the author outside it.

Matthew

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Apr 2003, 16:40 · follows matthew.malthouse

Yves Menard, not at all the author of the Quixote, points out that the animals Isangoma mentions are South African in origin and observes that:

This seems to point rather strongly to a South-American context.

Which is much better stated than my foolhardy and premature use of "must." (Thanks, Josh. A very strong word indeed.)

So I'm thinking that they don't come from the "real"  
South Africa at all, but from the South Africa of jungle movies.

Or more generally speaking, from the jungle country of jungle movies, that  
obscenely fecund, oppressively green realm that seems firmly rooted in our  
20th-century subconscious, without any need for external validation -- or  
consistency.

Bingo. Good catch.

And what do we know about the gardens and the people in them? That some people whose  
psyches are attuned to their peculiar ambiance wander in and are caught, and become part of  
the exhibit. (I'm not even quoting from memory, I'm paraphrasing from memory, so I can't cite  
page or anything.) It's entirely possible, and I suspect even likely, that Isangoma, Robert, and  
Marie are actually citizens of the Commonwealth who wandered in and were caught in this way.

Actually, I've suddenly entirely re-visioned the Botanic Gardens in my mind ... In other words,  
Father Inire has built (for whose amusement?) a theme park, a sort of posthistorical Walt Disney  
World with living audioanimatrons.

(The horror! The horror!)

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Thomas Bitterman — 17 Apr 2003, 23:06 · follows Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

matthew.malthouse at guardian.co.uk wrote:

This still leaves unanswered - and I freely admit I have no clear ideas  
here - the question about their purpose, the purpose intended by the  
builder within the narrative and the purpose of the author outside it.

Could it be a dual to the Library? Another place where people go and  
some never come back. Both places have hazy boundaries. Both places  
have old men who look for things. Severian goes to both places on an errand: one for books,  
another for an avorn. Both recipients end up dead.

Matthew

Tom

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James Jordan — 21 Apr 2003, 14:41 · follows Thomas Bitterman

Tom wrote:

Could [the Garden] be a dual to the Library? Another place where people  
go and some never come back. Both places have hazy boundaries. Both places  
have old men who look for things. Severian goes to both places on an  
errand: one for books, another for an avorn. Both recipients end up dead.

I suspect so. Compare the Bible with the Garden of Eden as "deep sources" for the pair. The  
Library undergirds (literally) the Commonwealth civilization. The Garden is also underground.  
Both are broad images of foundations and origins, relating to the past. The fact that the Garden  
contains missionaries and also is a place of death is Edenic, broadly speaking.  
IIRC, the avorn is a "delight to the eyes" but brings death. Only the Conciliator can wield it with  
full profit. Mere Adams are advised to stay away from it. And of course, it comes from the  
heavens.

Those who are trapped in the Garden are those who fantasize about the past, and don't want to  
live in the real world (?). A return to Eden is a trap; "salvation" lies only in the future, after

judgment.

Probably a look at Talos's "Eschatology and Genesis" would provide more indications.  
Just some thoughts.

Nutria

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Che Monro — 22 Apr 2003, 00:26 · follows James Jordan

Nutria Wrote:

IIRC, the avern is a "delight to the eyes" but brings death. Only the Conciliator can wield it with full profit. Mere Adams are advised to stay away from it. And of course, it comes from the heavens.

Oooh. Another point I missed, thank you. Hmmm.

What is the profit when the Conciliator weilds the Avern? Perhaps he cured himself of death?  
And the flower bent and opened to reveal a face...

But what did it do? What was the significance of it?

Please.

Che

Ché Franz Joseph Monro -- <http://www.chemonro.com>  
che at chemonro.com -- flirt at technologist.com