

Breakfast with Apheta

The Urth list — 20 messages, 12 voices, 22 Jul 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5114>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Roy C. Lackey — 22 Jul 2008, 22:48

On the morning after Severian bedded Apheta, she brought him breakfast on a tray. It consisted of "... small cakes, a carafe of cool water, and cups of some steaming liquid that looked like milk and yet was not milk." (URTH, XX, 146) He ate one of the cakes and drank a cup of the milky fluid, after Apheta took a bite of one of the cakes. I think this was the only meal Severian mentioned having on Yesod, and I believe there is some significance to its components or their combination that eludes me. Any ideas?

-Roy

b sharp — 23 Jul 2008, 04:25 · follows Roy C. Lackey

I wish I had a better answer for Roy's query but this is all I come up with. Maybe it is worth something:

The meal reminds me somewhat of the meal Pia serves Severian on a brassy tray. It also has cakes (made of cattail flower and clams) and Pia tests the wine, the fish and the duck before Severian tries them. She doesn't taste the salad and of course that's where the drug mushrooms are.

Apheta's meal is also served on a tray. She tastes the cakes first and then Severian tries them and sips milky drink from the cup. Apheta has to urge Severian to eat before he finishes both. After that Severian says, among other things, "As though the cup were drugged, I seemed to stand infinitely far from myself, to watch myself as a man watches a mote, to hear my own voice as a hawk hears the squeaking of a meadow mouse".

The seeing of himself from far above definitely reminds me of Severian's feeling of double identity when he is both a star (white fountain) and a man. Perhaps the milky drink (in addition to the sex?) did serve as some sort of drug which assists in creating Severian's New Sun status.

Pia was a prisoner-slave when she rather unwillingly served the drugged meal to Severian. Could Apheta be in a similar role? There are a bunch of guys standing watch in her chambers. And in conversation during the meal, Apheta admits that she lied the previous night and didn't desire Severian at all before they coupled; considers him a monster.

Wolfe used the "squeaking of mice" as a simile twice previously in this story. Once by Master Palaemon to say how the words of a prisoner should be heard in SotT. So again we must wonder about who might be a prisoner in this situation. Plus we have a predator/prey relationship mentioned.

The other use of the mouse simile is from CotA in a dream sequence. Severian hears Hethor's voice as the squeaking of a mouse. And in this dream, Hethor happens to be inside a carafe of water, the third item from Apheta's meal. The dream has Hethor babbling on about his ship with its "demon haunted mirror sails, our hundred-league masts" and "My lady, the mate of my

soul", "she is her own ship, she is the figurehead of her own ship and captain". Tzadkiel? The dream also includes the Cumaeen and Malrubius, who guide Severian to Typhon's eye where he is able to see the fruits of the Urth of the New Sun.

Perhaps I have been unduly influenced by the What's So Great About Ushas thread but thanks to that and Roy I now may perceive another deceptive and perhaps sinister side to Apheta's role and thus the Hierogrammates. Still a rather jumbled view I concede, but it makes one go, "hmmm...".

-bsharp

Roy's post:

On the morning after Severian bedded Apheta, she brought him breakfast on a tray. It consisted of "... small cakes, a carafe of cool water, and cups of some steaming liquid that looked like milk and yet was not milk." (URTH, XX, 146) He ate one of the cakes and drank a cup of the milky fluid, after Apheta took a bite of one of the cakes. I think this was the only meal Severian mentioned having on Yesod, and I believe there is some significance to its components or their combination that eludes me. Any ideas?

David Duffy — 23 Jul 2008, 08:40 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Tue, 22 Jul 2008, Roy C. Lackey wrote:
On the morning after Severian bedded Apheta, she brought him breakfast on a tray. It consisted of "... small cakes, a carafe of cool water, and cups of some steaming liquid that looked like milk and yet was not milk." (URTH, XX, 146) He ate one of the cakes and drank a cup of the milky fluid

Is it ambrosia?

David Duffy.

brunians at brunians.org — 23 Jul 2008, 08:44 · in reply to David Duffy

It doesn't look like it. Ambrosia is a type of honey, and nektar a type of mead.

I am not sure if GW knows this, but I bet he does, he knows all sorts of other odd stuff. If he doesn't, of course, it could be intended to be.

On Tue, 22 Jul 2008, Roy C. Lackey wrote:

On the morning after Severian bedded Apheta, she brought him breakfast on a tray. It consisted of "... small cakes, a carafe of cool water, and cups of some steaming liquid that looked like milk and yet was not milk." (URTH, XX, 146) He ate one of the cakes and drank a cup of the milky fluid

Is it ambrosia?

David Duffy.

Gwern Branwen — 23 Jul 2008, 12:34 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On 2008.07.22 17:48:53 -0500, "Roy C. Lackey" <rclackey at stic.net> scribbled 0.5K characters:

On the morning after Severian bedded Apheta, she brought him breakfast on a tray. It consisted of "... small cakes, a carafe of cool water, and cups of some steaming liquid that looked like milk and yet was not milk." (URTH, XX, 146) He ate one of the cakes and drank a cup of the milky fluid, after Apheta took a bite of one of the cakes. I think this was the only meal Severian mentioned having on Yesod, and I believe there is some significance to its components or their combination that eludes me. Any ideas?

-Roy

Is it just me, or do 'small cakes' scream Eucharist to anyone else?

gwern
supercomputer UTU d lamma airframe BOSS Lynch Starr munitions Bin

John Watkins — 23 Jul 2008, 13:08 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

I took is as explicitly not a Eucharist. Cake contrasts with bread, water contrasts with wine, God only knows what the "milky fluid" was.

On Wed, Jul 23, 2008 at 8:34 AM, Gwern Branwen <gwern0 at gmail.com> wrote:
On 2008.07.22 17:48:53 -0500, "Roy C. Lackey" <rclackey at stic.net> scribbled 0.5K characters:

On the morning after Severian bedded Apheta, she brought him breakfast on a tray. It consisted of "... small cakes, a carafe of cool water, and cups of some steaming liquid that looked like milk and yet was not milk." (URTH, XX, 146) He ate one of the cakes and drank a cup of the milky fluid, after Apheta took a bite of one of the cakes. I think this was the only meal Severian mentioned having on Yesod, and I believe there is some significance to its components or their combination that eludes me. Any ideas?

-Roy

Is it just me, or do 'small cakes' scream Eucharist to anyone else?

--

gwern
supercomputer UTU d lamma airframe BOSS Lynch Starr munitions Bin

-----BEGIN PGP SIGNATURE-----

Version: GnuPG v1.4.6 (GNU/Linux)

iD8DBQFIhyVZvpDo5Pfl1oIRCo/GAJ96DsZedPkUyqFxpHQPCe0G4JITDQCgII1Q
uA3WsZEaeTglfGhkc+795II=
=KV5/

-----END PGP SIGNATURE-----

Jeff Wilson — 23 Jul 2008, 13:55 · in reply to John Watkins

John Watkins wrote:

I took is as explicitly not a Eucharist. Cake contrasts with bread, water contrasts with wine, God only knows what the "milky fluid" was.

Being on an island, perhaps it was coconut milk?

Found on the internet:

Larvae are short, broad, and sluglike. Some species secrete honeydew, a sweet by-product of digestion that attracts ants. The ants stroke, or ?milk, the larva with their legs to stimulate honeydew secretion. The fragile adults of most blue species have brilliant blue wing surfaces, generally much darker in the females than in the males.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Sue — 23 Jul 2008, 17:59 · follows Jeff Wilson

Hi, all,

Just wanted to introduce myself -- I just found and subscribed to this listserv; although I've been a GW fan since I first picked up SotT, and then the rest of the series, as fast as the books came out, when I was in high school. (I've read them to rags, of course, in the intervening 20 years, and would have done so even if I hadn't ended up majoring in classics in college and becoming a fantasy writer myself. --Nowhere near of Wolfe's caliber, I hasten to add, tho' that rather goes without saying.) In any case, today's digest of "Urth" posts is the first I've received; and I'm delighted to meet y'all, so to speak.

Don't have too much to add, except that now that I've been prompted to consider the meal more closely, the 'milky fluid' seems to me suggestive of semen.

-- Chris

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 24 Jul 2008, 01:31 · follows Sue

Roy wrote:

On the morning after Severian bedded Apheta, she brought him breakfast on a tray. It consisted of "... small cakes, a carafe of cool water, and cups of some steaming liquid that looked like milk and yet was not milk." (URTH, XX, 146) He ate one of the cakes and drank a cup of the milky fluid, after Apheta took a bite of one of the cakes. I think this was the only meal Severian mentioned having on Yesod, and I believe there is some significance to its components or their combination that eludes me. Any ideas?

She's drugged him, I guess. Just another part of the set-up for the sham "trial". (And vague shades of Circe?)

Matthew Keeley — 24 Jul 2008, 13:17 · in reply to Sue

On Wed, Jul 23, 2008 at 1:59 PM, Sue <sywi at nyc.rr.com> wrote:

Don't have too much to add, except that now that I've been prompted to consider the meal more closely, the 'milky fluid' seems to me suggestive of semen.

Welcome to the list!

Re: milky fluid: And I just thought I had a dirty mind... Not sure what the significance of that would be though - perhaps Apheta's returning Severian's favor?

-Matt

Paul B — 24 Jul 2008, 14:43 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

Well, they do ostensibly have some surplus autarch testicles lying around... Which incidentally brings up an interesting inconsistency: if I remember correctly, the reason given for the castration of Epitome candidates is to prevent them from forming dynasties, but this measure would clearly not work for the majority of autarchs who apparently never even went to Yesod. (Severian seems to have trouble recalling others besides Ymar and his predecessor) It's an odd rule to apply to a minor, and perhaps better, part of the pool. Nevertheless, there don't seem to be dynasties anyway.

Paul

On Thu, Jul 24, 2008 at 9:17 AM, Matthew Keeley <matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:

On Wed, Jul 23, 2008 at 1:59 PM, Sue <sywi at nyc.rr.com> wrote:

Don't have too much to add, except that now that I've been prompted to consider the meal more closely, the 'milky fluid' seems to me suggestive of semen.

Welcome to the list!

Re: milky fluid: And I just thought I had a dirty mind... Not sure what the significance of that would be though - perhaps Apheta's returning Severian's favor?

-Matt

brunians at brunians.org — 24 Jul 2008, 14:49 · in reply to Paul B

Well, they do ostensibly have some surplus autarch testicles lying around...

Which incidentally brings up an interesting inconsistency: if I remember correctly, the reason given for the castration of Epitome candidates is to prevent them from forming dynasties, but this measure would clearly not work

for the majority of autarchs who apparently never even went to Yesod. (Severian seems to have trouble recalling others besides Ymar and his predecessor)

It's an odd rule to apply to a minor, and perhaps better, part of the pool.

Nevertheless, there don't seem to be dynasties anyway.

OK son, take the little knife and break Daddy's skull open....

.

Paul B — 24 Jul 2008, 16:41 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Thu, Jul 24, 2008 at 10:49 AM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

OK son, take the little knife and break Daddy's skull open....

If by that you mean that filial sentiments are enough to rule out dynasties, your claim is on uncertain grounds given the histories of kings forced by children - for example, Henry II. That notwithstanding, even if it's sufficient it again begs the question of why the castrations.

Paul

brunians at brunians.org — 24 Jul 2008, 17:17 · in reply to Paul B

On Thu, Jul 24, 2008 at 10:49 AM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

OK son, take the little knife and break Daddy's skull open....

If by that you mean that filial sentiments are enough to rule out dynasties, your claim is on uncertain grounds given the histories of kings forced by children - for example, Henry II.

I was making a tiny joke. Poor little joke!

That notwithstanding, even if it's sufficient it again begs the question of why the castrations.

It's just good clean fun.

.

brunians at brunians.org — 24 Jul 2008, 17:22 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

I mean, here you are, the autarch out by yourself in the woods with your six year old son or daughter. Whatever happens happens to cut you off from your support and bodyguards and so on happens, and a tree falls on you, breaking your back, causing massive internal injuries. It is apparent that you are not going to live more than a few more minutes. Your child is unhurt. What do you do?

.

On Thu, Jul 24, 2008 at 10:49 AM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

OK son, take the little knife and break Daddy's skull open....

If by that you mean that filial sentiments are enough to rule out dynasties, your claim is on uncertain grounds given the histories of kings forced by children - for example, Henry II.

I was making a tiny joke. Poor little joke!

That notwithstanding, even if it's sufficient it again begs the question of why the castrations.

It's just good clean fun.

.

Paul B — 24 Jul 2008, 21:53 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

Man, you do what you gotta do to keep the whole thing going, or so the castration aliens tell you. It's certainly more likely that some adult who happens along is more up to the task, but there's no reason that an autarch who sits out on the trip to Yesod couldn't arrange it to be his

kid. It seems the reason the castration aliens give can't be the real reason. I guess they could just be having a bit of fun, or making sure they're taken seriously.

Paul

On Thu, Jul 24, 2008 at 1:22 PM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

I mean, here you are, the autarch out by yourself in the woods with your six year old son or daughter. Whatever happens happens to cut you off from your support and bodyguards and so on happens, and a tree falls on you, breaking your back, causing massive internal injuries. It is apparent that you are not going to live more than a few more minutes. Your child is unhurt. What do you do?

.

On Thu, Jul 24, 2008 at 10:49 AM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

OK son, take the little knife and break Daddy's skull open....

If by that you mean that filial sentiments are enough to rule out dynasties, your claim is on uncertain grounds given the histories of kings forced by children - for example, Henry II.

I was making a tiny joke. Poor little joke!

That notwithstanding, even if it's sufficient it again begs the question of why the castrations.

It's just good clean fun.

.

brunians at brunians.org — 24 Jul 2008, 22:32 · in reply to Paul B

Could just be sadism. Yet another way in which the 'castration aliens' resemble God/angels and so on, who tend to be pretty sadistic, and apparently enjoy messing with people that they like (cf Abraham).

Apropos of little or nothing, the idea of the Court of Heaven in Judaism and Christianity is modeled on the court of the (Achaemenid) Great King of Persia.

.

Man, you do what you gotta do to keep the whole thing going, or so the castration aliens tell you. It's certainly more likely that some adult who happens along is more up to the task, but there's no reason that an autarch who sits out on the trip to Yesod couldn't arrange it to be his kid.

It seems the reason the castration aliens give can't be the real reason. I guess they could just be having a bit of fun, or making sure they're taken seriously.

Paul

On Thu, Jul 24, 2008 at 1:22 PM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

I mean, here you are, the autarch out by yourself in the woods with your six year old son or daughter. Whatever happens happens to cut you off from

your support and bodyguards and so on happens, and a tree falls on you, breaking your back, causing massive internal injuries. It is apparent that you are not going to live more than a few more minutes. Your child is unhurt. What do you do?

.

On Thu, Jul 24, 2008 at 10:49 AM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

OK son, take the little knife and break Daddy's skull open....

If by that you mean that filial sentiments are enough to rule out dynasties, your claim is on uncertain grounds given the histories of kings forced by children - for example, Henry II.

I was making a tiny joke. Poor little joke!

That notwithstanding, even if it's sufficient it again begs the question of why the castrations.

It's just good clean fun.

.

Gwern Branwen — 26 Jul 2008, 23:13 · in reply to John Watkins

On 2008.07.23 09:08:06 -0400, John Watkins <john.watkins04 at gmail.com> scribbled 1.3K characters:

I took is as explicitly not a Eucharist. Cake contrasts with bread, water contrasts with wine, God only knows what the "milky fluid" was.

I dunno, I mean - aren't cakes made of bread (even if cake is meant in the confectionary sense)? According to Google, the phrase "Eucharist cake" isn't even unheard of.

gwern

EDI Halliburton BRGE UHF JITEM composition high explosion EODG quarter

Stanisław Bocian — 29 Jul 2008, 21:58 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

Hierogrammates shouldn't be underestimated. They don't NEED Severian to create the White Fountain, they can do it by their own technology. However, they prefer not to act at all. They must be conscious that they know the will of the Uncreate no better than anyone (the fable of the cock and angel says this openly), and so perhaps are unwilling to bear the guild for the mass murder on Urth.

Accordingly, they take care to do nothing themselves at all: Apheta's explanation of their speech shows that they generally don't act themselves, but only modulate the acts of others. The discussion of Hierodules with Baldanders shows that they consider themselves not to be guilty for so "modulated" actions of others.

And so, they needed Severian as an executioner who would lawfully execute Urth. He had to be an autarch, so he could act as the lawful representant of humanity. Except for that, he had no "magic powers". The white fountain and Severian's connection to it was provided by Hierogrammates - of course, in a way which absolves them of all guilt in the matter.

Stanislaus B.

Roy wrote:

On the morning after Severian bedded Apheta, she brought him breakfast on a tray. It consisted of "... small cakes, a carafe of cool water, and cups of some steaming liquid that looked like milk and yet was not milk." (URTH, XX, 146) He ate one of the cakes and drank a cup of the milky fluid, after Apheta took a bite of one of the cakes. I think this was the only meal Severian mentioned having on Yesod, and I believe there is some significance to its components or their combination that eludes me. Any ideas?

She's drugged him, I guess. Just another part of the set-up for the sham "trial". (And vague shades of Circe?)

Tanie rozmowy!

Sprawdz >>> <http://link.interia.pl/f1e91>

brunians at brunians.org — 29 Jul 2008, 22:28 · in reply to Stanisław Bocian

Closely reasoned and, I believe, as close to correct as anything is in the World.

.

Hierogrammates shouldn't be underestimated. They don't NEED Severian to create the White Fountain, they can do it by their own technology. However, they prefer not to act at all. They must be conscious that they know the will of the Uncreate no better than anyone (the fable of the cock and angel says this openly), and so perhaps are unwilling to bear the guild for the mass murder on Urth.

Accordingly, they take care to do nothing themselves at all: Apheta's explanation of their speech shows that they generally don't act themselves, but only modulate the acts of others. The discussion of Hierodules with Baldanders shows that they consider themselves not to be guilty for so "modulated" actions of others.

And so, they needed Severian as an executioner who would lawfully execute Urth. He had to be an autarch, so he could act as the lawful representant of humanity. Except for that, he had no "magic powers". The white fountain and Severian's connection to it was provided by Hierogrammates - of course, in a way which absolves them of all guilt in the matter.

Stanislaus B.

Roy wrote:

On the morning after Severian bedded Apheta, she brought him breakfast on a tray. It consisted of "... small cakes, a carafe of cool water, and cups of some steaming liquid that looked like milk and yet was not milk." (URTH, XX, 146) He ate one of the cakes and drank a cup of the milky fluid, after Apheta took a bite of one of the cakes. I think this was the only meal Severian mentioned having on Yesod, and I believe there is some significance to its components or their combination that eludes me. Any ideas?

She's drugged him, I guess. Just another part of the set-up for the sham "trial". (And vague shades of Circe?)

--

Tanie rozmowy!
Sprawdz >>> <http://link.interia.pl/f1e91>
