

Exultants leaving Urth

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 01 May 1998

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sph1635 — 01 May 1998, 13:27

Prehaps, just for speculation, the exultants left because of the new "Ice Age" that has been hinted at in TBotNS. This could have been the cataclysm seperating one era from another. On another point the navagator's funeral sounds a bit old fashioned from the description, but then again Wolfe doesn't really describe any another funeral (except in the Long Sun series, Orpine's rites and burial, which is described in the same fashion). So who am I to say?
Xury

Mark Millman — 01 May 1998, 15:21 · follows sph1635

Personally, I've always favored the explanation that the exultant families were genetically engineered as aristocrats and military leaders. They're taller so that they will look more impressive to the common run of folk and can be more easily seen in battle. Certain passages suggest this, as when the youthful Severian, talking about the changes Vodalus would make, says that unlike the exultants, armigers are afraid to fight and to hurt and to die, and later (I think in Citadel, but I'm not sure), when it's mentioned, possibly by the old Autarch, that even the exultants don't care to exercise their power and will avoid it when possible, because they're aware that they can't do it wisely or well. A related possibility is that the exultants were genetically engineered (or evolved over the course of time, though this seems less likely) as residents of heavy-gravity worlds, and were chosen as soldiers by invading forces, possibly Typhon, since they had the advantage of being stronger than ordinary people. They'd have lost their strength on Urth, through not having been exposed to the full gravity of their homeworlds, but might well exchange it for greater size (from not growing up under the pressure of the greater gravity, assuming they were designed to reach average human height despite it). But this is all rank speculation, though some details (such as Piaton's great strength and size--remember, we don't know whether Typhon had been unusually tall before being grafted on to Piaton) might be adduced to support it.

Mark Millman

P.S. I just read Shirley Jackson's We Have Always Lived in the Castle. Does anyone else think that it strongly resembles Peace in its preoccupation with history, its depiction of the Blackwoods' house as ossified and devoted to the preservation of the past, the death-in-life of the characters, especially through self-imposed limitations, and its repeated focus on poison? There are more similarities in its details, but I don't care to go into them at the moment, so here I've just given a few of the grander themes the two books seem to me to share.

M.M.