

ExultantsComing2Urth

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

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m.driussi — 01 May 1998, 19:33

Reply: Item #5001329 from URTH at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET01#

Seems to me, fwiw, etc. ad naseum, that the exultants are from offworld, probably from outsystem. They grow tall because of the technobloodmagic they practice upon their khaibits (the khaibits stay at their natural height of around 6 feet tall; the exultants, using the royal jelly extracted from their khaibits, grow and grow, like Baldanders [and along the same principles] but within tasteful limits, lest they turn into undines). They use a birth zodiac including the constellation of the Swan, which is more than a little impossible from our solar system, but incredibly easy from any other star. Severian says exultants are ancient; Jonas, who is more than ancient, looks upon exultants with wonder and says they are quite new.

Why would exultants leave Urth (if there were any true exultants on Urth before they came along with Typhon--see Jonas's attitude above)? Uh, umm, because it is a hellhole backwater toxic waste dump? Lacking low tech resources that have all been locked up in dead and buried supercities, if not flown downstream into the ocean's trenches, in those cases where they have not been blasted out into space with ships and offworld colonies. The main exports are slaves, furs, meat and trinkets (appendix to CITADEL). In the solar system sense, it is far below "third world" status--it is more like equatorial Africa at the height of the slave trade. The nice places to live are Verthandi and Lune. Typhon moving his capital to Urth (from where ever it was before) was a symbolic move that probably caused more trouble than it was worth.

Re: cataclysms. Well, there was a great deal of extinction, due to pollution, over use of land, overpopulation, and/or whatever else. The last animals that survived were the farm animals. Then when Urth was reseeded with creatures, they came from alien worlds. (The alzabo is a case in point.)

Re: Beunos Aires as Nessus. Step one: draw your map of the Commonwealth. Step two: look at the map given in PLAN[E]T ENGINEERING. Repeat as necessary.

=mantis=

Mark Millman — 01 May 1998, 17:22 · follows m.driussi

Hey mantis--

While I personally agree that the exultants, whether they are systematically (i.e., genetically) taller or individually (i.e., royally-jellied) taller, probably have returned from outsystem (and, by the way, I don't believe they first left for the stars as exultants; I think that must be a later development), who's to say that the Swan (the only zodiacal sign mentioned in BotNS, no?) is the same one we see? Just to play devil's advocate: how different will the constellations be after one or two or fifty million years? The Swan could well be a New Swan and not our Cygnus. The fact that Wolfe, as "translator", chooses to say "Swan" rather than "Cygnus" may be significant. And Severian doesn't seem to think it odd that Thecla mentions the Swan rather than one of our

canonical signs.

A side issue in relation to this: Severian refers to the exultants as ancient families, while Jonas claims that they are the newest of families. Does this imply that Jonas actually knows of older surviving families? (A side note to the side note: While the time scales are of course totally different, in Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover books, the Hasturs are an old and powerful family. It's known, however (at least to the well-informed), that there are older families than those of the powerful psis; these, we find out, are families surviving from several of the original colonists who first landed on Darkover, and who were usurped by the Hasturs and their allies.) I'd argue yes; though Jonas almost certainly has not been traveling in the haunts of power, he has undoubtedly been much further, geographically, than we've been told. Perhaps, like Eata, he's visited the Xanthic Lands. While we only get to see the Commonwealth and a sliver of Ascian society, it appears that exultants may be limited to the Autarch's dominions. Certainly, if there had been Ascian exultants, they at least have long since been subsumed, perhaps subverted, by the Populace (could the blind mounts that Severian faced once have been exultants?). But there's no reason to suppose that they exist outside of the Commonwealth. They should at first have clustered around the seat of power (I doubt, if they were Typhon's generals, for example, that he trusted them out of his sight), and later may have remained where they were through inertia or a desire to remain near their compatriots. The book of exultant lineages that Gurloes shows Severian doesn't seem to imply that there are any extra-Commonwealth ones; there would surely have been some intermarriage between nations if exultants were more widely distributed. But wait! In UotNS, Severian never mentions seeing any exultants (though I grant that he doesn't mention an unusual lack of them, either), either in Typhon's mountain city or in the pre-Citadel port. These are the haunts of power. perhaps the exultant families aren't created, or don't arrive, until the Commonwealth period has begun, and their "ancientness" is an artifact of their power and visibility. Valeria's family, which Severian suggests is the oldest of which he personally knows, is certainly not an exulted one.

Well, enough of that. I'm really more interested in whether anyone has read most or all of Shirley Jackson's works, and whether there are other possible influences on Wolfe among them.

Mark Millman