

# TheStarsAtNightAreBig&

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 02 May 1998

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m.driussi — 02 May 1998, 01:04

Mark Millman,

Sure, the night sky of Urth could be utterly alien to us. Severian knows precious little about constellations--alone in the mountains, he makes up a few: "amphisbaena" and "peryton." So we can't rely much upon his sense of canonical signs. Severian is also bad with birthdays--after all, he doesn't even know when his own is.

However! We are told that the Eight "hang forever over the southern ice" (IV, ch. 25), i.e., they don't rise and set, i.e., they are pole stars. This pins the celestial globe a bit. To have a pole star in the place it is right now is an odd detail to use if everything in the sky is supposed to be weird and alien.

Re: zodiac signs. You are correct in that Swan is the only one identified as a birth sign. And, further, none of the other constellations Severian mentions are zodiac signs for us or him (or so it seems). However! Heh-heh, Hethor mentions Aquarius, Pisces, and Aries (IV, ch. 4), fwiw, but makes no indication that they are zodiacal (other than listing them in that order). (And it may just be another tenuous link to our own Earth and zodiac, showing Hethor's great antiquity.)

For time lines, I personally think that a million years in the future (from 1981 to Severian's Reign) is the outer edge and it is likely to be much closer than that. Stars move a lot in even a few thousand years! Constellations warp, morph, waddle, and wheedle!

Re: exultants. Well, Wolfe says that khaibits are clones. The Old Autarch says (IIRC) that the exultants are big because of the blood and stuff they take from their own khaibits ("grown from the body cells of exultant women so an exchange of blood will prolong the exultants' youth" [IV, ch. 24]; Ossipago speaking of Baldanders, "Growth has its disadvantages, though for your species [humans] it is the only method by which youth can be reinstated" [III, ch. 34]). As such, it seems to me, khaibits represent unmodified exultants--further, I believe they are not stunted by abuse or malnutrition, since their bodies must provide the royal jelly. Khaibits are natural; exultants are augmented.

The blind mount tall men of Ascian cavalry as descendents of exultants (i.e., the equivalent of khaibits) is a very interesting idea I haven't considered before. It certainly fits in a communistic "what to do with the aristocrats after the revolution" sort of way. Interesting. Creepy! (Maybe even the dwarves who ride them represent the former khaibits? That is: the khaibits are "ridden" by exultants, but after the revolution the lowly shall ride upon the high.) (Then again, this is all "Warg-rider" stuff as refigured by a man named Wolfe.)

=mantis=

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Matthew Malthouse — 11 May 1998, 11:09 · follows m.driussi

m.driussi at genie.geis.com wrote:

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and also

David Paul<janus at ioa.com> wrote:

For some time, I've been listening to the bickering about where Nessus actually is. The argument hinges on the fact that South America doesn't have any areas with mountains to the northeast and rivers running southwest. This is untrue. When most people think of South America, they think of Brazil, but the stone twon of Apu-Punchau makes it fairly clear that we're dealing with Inca territory -- probably Chile and Argentina. This makes Nessus out to be Buenos Aires, which fits in nicely with the Ulthan/Borges comparison -- Borges was chief librarian of some library or another in BA.

Hi folks,

I'm new here so if this is a rehash of what other's ahve said before I apologise.

The age of Urth has, from my very first reason seemed to be immense. It seemed to me that Wolfe took pains to emphasise this but there are three things that confirm the idea for me:

The miners of Saltus have for generations made a living (shaft) mining for ancient artifacts.

Walking down the cliff trail to the forest house Severian notes that the fault that lifted the cliff (a league high??) has exposed the detritus of man's occupation, he even describes some of what he sees I think (floor tiles?)

And finally the "newer" mountain ranges are recognisable as such because they are sharp and rugged - in contrast to the 'old' mountain that have all be carved into the likeness of past Autarchs (rather than being softened from weathering). Did Typhon start the fashion, or was he merely the aprotheosis of it?

In any case Typhon's coming to Urth (which I believe to be long after its decline started) is at least one and possibly many geological ages past.

So I have the inescapable feeling that we are looking at a long time, a long, long time, far more than m.driussi's million year outer edge.

oh, and had anyone noticed that the sun looked a bit tired?

In the light of the above I don't see much good to be had trying to identify Nessus or other landmarks from our Earth, but to nay-say Buenos Aires: Nessus isn't and wasn't a coastal city; the plate river isn't big enough; Severian turns the wrong way from Trax to reach a battlefield of an invader coming from Centram AM. and in relation to the Plate/Andes Cen.Am is too far away (or the Andes to close) to be the "waist of the world" beyond which the Ascians can be driven.

Also I have the idea (which I can't justify) that the southern bottom of the continent is broad and rounded. The only relationship to Earth that looked promising to me was tipping S.America on its side with continental drift so the mouth of the Amazon pointed at the antartic seas. But the same could be done with the Yangtse or even the Mississippi at a stretch.

Okay, I'll just get my coat...

Matthew