

Babbie, a Destrier?

The Urth list — 7 messages, 6 voices, 10 Jan 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5531>

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Tom Hopkins — 10 Jan 2010, 22:52

Hello I'm new to the group so please forgive me if this has already been asked. I also apologise if I have submitted this to the wrong place.

After reading recently through the Long and Short Sun books, it seems to me that Babbie is hinted to be what Severian comes to know as a Destrier, or they are related in some way.

Several features seem to be common to both: the tusks or long teeth, the red eyes and the claws which are often called hooves. Whilst Babbie starts off small, he grows to be around the same size as I imagine a Destrier does. The main problem I see against this theory is the fact a Hus is described as having 8 legs, whilst I can't remember Destriers being described as such, I also however cannot remember them being described as having only 4 limbs either; and as for much of my first reading I simply assumed Destriers to be horses, I can imagine myself merely assuming they have four limbs also.

The main issue that confuses me is that even if they aren't the same creature, why are they so similar. Especially the part when Babbie first emerges and horn says;

"It advanced, the thick, short claws some people call hooves loud on the stone floor,". As well as all the other details, they seem too similar for it to be merely accidental even if they are a completely different species.

After searching through the archives I couldn't find this topic yet discussed, I apologise if it has been and I simply missed it. I am just curious to hear your thoughts on the matter, even if I am completely wrong, so any replies would be much appreciated.

John Smith — 11 Jan 2010, 12:56 · in reply to Tom Hopkins

You're right about the resemblances, but I don't think they're the same. — In the Appendix to Shadow, Wolfe says, "I have scrupled to call these creatures horses, since I am certain the word is not strictly correct. ? ??The 'Destriers' of — The Book of the New Sun are unquestionably swifter and more enduring than the animals we know, and the speed of those used for military purposes seems to permit the delivering of cavalry charges against enemies supported by high-energy armament."

This passage suggests that destriers are closely related to our horses--probably genetically modified--and not as different as the eight-legged hus.

Best wishes,

Jack

--- On Sun, 1/10/10, Tom Hopkins <topkins at hotmail.co.uk> wrote:

From: Tom Hopkins <topkins at hotmail.co.uk>
Subject: (urth) Babbie, a Destrier?
To: urth at urth.net
Date: Sunday, January 10, 2010, 5:52 PM

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Tom Hopkins — 11 Jan 2010, 15:52 · in reply to John Smith

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The main problem I have is just how similar they are, unless its just Wolfe playing tricks I feel there must be a reason behind it. I also found the Shear Bear mentioned in the Long Sun omnibus to be very reminiscent of the Alzabo in New Sun; this however is more of a guess and has much less evidence to support a link between the two. The only real inclination I got of this was merely in the text where the Shear Bear is mentioned it does sound similar to the attributes of an Alzabo.

Another point I feel worth mentioning which relates to all 3 is that the Hus, Destriers and Alzabo are all described as having red eyes. Whilst this could well be nothing, it seems curious to me as all 3 (If we are counting Hus and Destriers as separate) are of alien origin, with at least the Destrier being in some way a construct of man. Does this hint a connection between them all, in that they are possibly from the same planet or eco system?

I'd be very interested to hear thoughts on the matter, thanks.

Date: Mon, 11 Jan 2010 04:56:25 -0800

From: jsmith2627 at att.net

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Subject: Re: (urth) Babbie, a Destrier?

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John Watkins — 11 Jan 2010, 15:55 · in reply to Tom Hopkins

Maybe Wolfe thinks that red eyes look cool.

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David Stockhoff — 11 Jan 2010, 22:19 · follows John Watkins

I think sometimes it's that simple.

If anything, I think they are markers of otherworldliness. Gnomes, kobolds, dwarves (my email

composer wants me to say "dwarfs"!)), orcs, etc., often have red eyes, or black. Granted, brownies have brown eyes and fairies blue.

For Wolfe, red eyes seem to be a sign of alien-ness, like multiple legs.

Message: 1

Date: Mon, 11 Jan 2010 10:55:49 -0500

From: John Watkins <john.watkins04 at gmail.com>

Adam Thornton — 12 Jan 2010, 01:52 · in reply to Tom Hopkins

Tom Hopkins wrote:

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My objection is that down this road lies the Vernor Vinge madness of the cheery little hobbit-type aliens with the gootfy names actually turning out to be GROTESQUE SPACE SPIDERS.

Adam

Jerry Friedman — 12 Jan 2010, 04:46 · in reply to Tom Hopkins

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Appendix of Shadow of the
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commonplace and known by nearly all; and therefore fail to
mention.

I don't think Wolfe is trying to give a consistent picture of not knowing anything other than what's in Severian's manuscript. For one thing, how did he learn the language? For another, there are the comments at the end of the Appendix to /Shadow/ about collectors who have let him see artifacts and people who have let him visit "the era's few extant buildings".

Of course this contradicts the idea that Sev's universe is an earlier cycle of ours, and the other three appendices seem to imply that "the manuscripts" are the only source of knowledge. Anyway, the picture is inconsistent, and Wolfe may have changed his mind at some point.

Of course we still have the right to picture destriers
as having eight legs without Wolfe's knowing it--in
which case does /he/ know whether they're related to

huses? As you say below, this could be something he thought of later.

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...

Jerry Friedman