

Fuligin?

The Urth list — 20 messages, 8 voices, 15 Jul 2014

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6573>

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.

Ryan Buller — 15 Jul 2014, 13:05

Thought this was fun.

Good to know they have the material needed to start a Torturer's Guild. :)

<http://io9.com/meet-vantablack-the-worlds-darkest-material-1605123430>

Antonin Scriabin — 15 Jul 2014, 13:06 · in reply to Ryan Buller

What is the liquid in Terminus Est? That should be next.

On Jul 15, 2014 9:05 AM, "Ryan Buller" <hoofandhide at gmail.com> wrote:
Thought this was fun.

Good to know they have the material needed to start a Torturer's Guild. :)

<http://io9.com/meet-vantablack-the-worlds-darkest-material-1605123430>

Mo Holkar — 15 Jul 2014, 14:01 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

Just mercury, isn't it?

Mo

At 14:06 15/07/2014, Antonin wrote:
What is the liquid in Terminus Est? That should be next.

Jeffery Wilson clueland.com — 15 Jul 2014, 15:50 · in reply to Mo Holkar

On 7/15/2014 9:01 AM, Mo Holkar wrote:
Just mercury, isn't it?

The translator G.W. transcribes it as "hydrargyrum", but it could be something more exotic.

Jeff Wilson - <jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

David Stockhoff — 16 Jul 2014, 13:37 · in reply to Jeffery Wilson clueland.com

"Spinning liquid silver"?

On 7/15/2014 11:50 AM, Jeffery Wilson clueland.com wrote:
On 7/15/2014 9:01 AM, Mo Holkar wrote:

Just mercury, isn't it?

The translator G.W. transcribes it as "hydrargyrum", but it could be something more exotic.

Mo Holkar — 16 Jul 2014, 13:59 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Hydrargyrum is the Latinized Greek name for mercury, hence its chemical symbol Hg. The 'gyr' is just part of 'argyros', Greek for silver.

My understanding is that everything described about this liquid in the text is satisfied by mercury, so there seems no reason to consider it to be anything different.

It's not the same (it seems to me) as where he calls a riding beast by the name of a prehistoric animal and so we must understand it's not that animal and nor is it a horse. Hydrargyrum is not an ancient substance predecessor to mercury; it's an archaic name for precisely contemporary mercury.

Mo

At 14:37 16/07/2014, you wrote:
"Spinning liquid silver"?

On 7/15/2014 11:50 AM, Jeffery Wilson clueland.com wrote:

On 7/15/2014 9:01 AM, Mo Holkar wrote:

Just mercury, isn't it?

The translator G.W. transcribes it as "hydrargyrum", but it could be something more exotic.

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 16 Jul 2014, 14:25 · in reply to Mo Holkar

Yes, this is definitely a case of deploying an exotic-sounding but technically precise term for an ordinary substance.

On Wednesday, July 16, 2014 9:59 AM, Mo Holkar <mo at holkar.net> wrote:

Hydrargyrum is the Latinized Greek name for mercury, hence its chemical symbol Hg. The 'gyr' is just part of 'argyros', Greek for silver.

My understanding is that everything described about this liquid in the text is satisfied by mercury, so there seems no reason to consider it to be anything different.

It's not the same (it seems to me) as where he calls a riding beast by the name of a prehistoric animal and so we must understand it's not that animal and nor is it a horse. Hydrargyrum is not an ancient substance predecessor to mercury; it's an archaic name for precisely contemporary mercury.

Mo

At 14:37 16/07/2014, you wrote:
"Spinning liquid silver"?

On 7/15/2014 11:50 AM, Jeffery Wilson clueland.com wrote:

On 7/15/2014 9:01 AM, Mo Holkar wrote:

Just mercury, isn't it?

The translator G.W. transcribes it as "hydrargyrum", but it could be something more exotic.

Jeffery Wilson clueland.com — 16 Jul 2014, 15:47 · in reply to Mo Holkar

On 7/16/2014 8:59 AM, Mo Holkar wrote:

Hydrargyrum is the Latinized Greek name for mercury, hence its chemical symbol Hg. The 'gyr' is just part of 'argyros', Greek for silver.

My understanding is that everything described about this liquid in the text is satisfied by mercury, so there seems no reason to consider it to be anything different.

It's not the same (it seems to me) as where he calls a riding beast by the name of a prehistoric animal and so we must understand it's not that animal and nor is it a horse. Hydrargyrum is not an ancient substance predecessor to mercury; it's an archaic name for precisely contemporary mercury.

G.W. says, "Latin is once or twice employed to indicate that inscriptions and the like are in a language Severian appears to consider obsolete. What the actual language may have been, I cannot say."

In 3.37, it is writ, "Whatever had occurred, the mace was gone, and I held in my hands only the sword's hilt, from which protruded less than a cubit of shattered metal. The hydrargyrum that had labored so long in the darkness there ran from it now in silver tears."

If this substance is mercury, as known to the ancient Greeks and popularized in current science and left in dangerous quantities from the mid 20th century peak of its production and use, and suitable for Galilean vacuums, mercury switches, and driving hatters mad, it seems odd that there would be no current word for it encountered by Severian.

Jeff Wilson - <jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 16 Jul 2014, 15:56 · in reply to Jeffery Wilson clueland.com

Perhaps, but you certainly wouldn't expect him to call it "mercury." Way too many conflicting associations there. And I doubt there would be a common term for it anyway--who would have it sitting around the house?

On Wednesday, July 16, 2014 11:47 AM, Jeffery Wilson clueland.com <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:

On 7/16/2014 8:59 AM, Mo Holkar wrote:

Hydrargyrum is the Latinized Greek name for mercury, hence its chemical symbol Hg. The 'gyr' is just part of 'argyros', Greek for silver.

My understanding is that everything described about this liquid in the

text is satisfied by mercury, so there seems no reason to consider it to be anything different.

It's not the same (it seems to me) as where he calls a riding beast by the name of a prehistoric animal and so we must understand it's not that animal and nor is it a horse. Hydrargyrum is not an ancient substance predecessor to mercury; it's an archaic name for precisely contemporary mercury.

G.W. says, "Latin is once or twice employed to indicate that inscriptions and the like are in a language Severian appears to consider obsolete. What the actual language may have been, I cannot say."

In 3.37, it is writ, "Whatever had occurred, the mace was gone, and I held in my hands only the sword's hilt, from which protruded less than a cubit of shattered metal. The hydrargyrum that had labored so long in the darkness there ran from it now in silver tears."

If this substance is mercury, as known to the ancient Greeks and popularized in current science and left in dangerous quantities from the mid 20th century peak of its production and use, and suitable for Galilean vacuums, mercury switches, and driving hatters mad, it seems odd that there would be no current word for it encountered by Severian.

--

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

Gerry Quinn — 16 Jul 2014, 16:25 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

On 16/07/2014 16:56, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:
Perhaps, but you certainly wouldn't expect him to call it "mercury."
Way too many conflicting associations there. And I doubt there would be a common term for it anyway---who would have it sitting around the house

I'd say he might have considered 'quicksilver' but 'hydrargyrum' sounds better.

- Gerry Quinn

Jeffery Wilson clueland.com — 16 Jul 2014, 16:25 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

On 7/16/2014 10:56 AM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:
Perhaps, but you certainly wouldn't expect him to call it "mercury." Way too many conflicting associations there.

Whatever word the Commonwealth's tongue had for it, if that was used and it was apparent from context that it was something we know today, mercury, G.W. would've writ the word we use, "mercury", like he does with all the other words where that is the case.

And I doubt there would be a common term for it anyway---who would have it sitting around the house?

People whose homes contain Emerald Tablets and homunculi, and other 20th century electrical conveniences like electric eyes and metal detectors, or whose homes are rocketships crammed

full of eternally repaired ancient gear that might include mercury switches, mercury balances, mercury bearings, et cetera. Autarch Severian is both, and then some.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< http://www.tamut.edu/cil >

Gerry Quinn — 16 Jul 2014, 17:36 · in reply to Jeffery Wilson clueland.com

On 16/07/2014 17:25, Jeffery Wilson clueland.com wrote:

On 7/16/2014 10:56 AM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:

And I doubt there would be a
common term for it anyway---who would have it sitting around the house?

People whose homes contain Emerald Tablets and homunculi, and other
20th century electrical conveniences like electric eyes and metal
detectors, or whose homes are rocketships crammed full of eternally
repaired ancient gear that might include mercury switches, mercury
balances, mercury bearings, et cetera. Autarch Severian is both, and
then some.

For the educated classes in the Commonwealth, the substance would be reasonably familiar,
Probably not so much for the common people, But I don't see any issue with the use of a new
technical name for it. Mars and Venus have new names, why not mercury?

Also, if Severian is familiar with mercury, shouldn't he explain to us why hydrargyrum is
superior for weighting swords?

If it's not different, what does it matter if it is something else? Sure, some future EPA may have
banned the use of mercury, but if so it's been replaced by a new material that to all intents and
purposes is exactly the same!

- Gerry Quinn

Marc Aramini — 16 Jul 2014, 18:33 · in reply to Jeffery Wilson clueland.com

I have to thematically disagree with that assessment, Jeffery. The astronaut is called a knight,
the Latin is mistranslated ... New things get old names, but sometimes old things get new or
even older names. Could very easily be Mercury. Would the loft of his blade be greatly affected
by temperatures? Warm or cold weather blade?

On Wednesday, July 16, 2014, Jeffery Wilson clueland.com <
jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:

On 7/16/2014 10:56 AM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:

Perhaps, but you certainly wouldn't expect him to call it "mercury." Way
too many conflicting associations there.

Whatever word the Commonwealth's tongue had for it, if that was used and
it was apparent from context that it was something we know today, mercury,
G.W. would've writ the word we use, "mercury", like he does with all the
other words where that is the case.

And I doubt there would be a
common term for it anyway---who would have it sitting around the house?

People whose homes contain Emerald Tablets and homunculi, and other 20th
century electrical conveniences like electric eyes and metal detectors, or
whose homes are rocketships crammed full of eternally repaired ancient gear
that might include mercury switches, mercury balances, mercury bearings, et

cetera. Autarch Severian is both, and then some.

--

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 16 Jul 2014, 19:56 · in reply to Marc Aramini

Mercury has a very low freezing point and a very high boiling point. Hard to imagine temperature being a problem!

On Wednesday, July 16, 2014 2:34 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at gmail.com> wrote:

I have to thematically disagree with that assessment, Jeffery. "The astronaut is called a knight, the Latin is mistranslated ... New things get old names, but sometimes old things get new or even older names. ?Could very easily be Mercury. ?Would the loft of his blade be greatly affected by temperatures" "Warm or cold weather blade"

On Wednesday, July 16, 2014, Jeffery Wilson clueland.com <jwilson at clueland.com> wrote:

On 7/16/2014 10:56 AM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:

Perhaps, but you certainly wouldn't expect him to call it "mercury." Way too many conflicting associations there.

Whatever word the Commonwealth's tongue had for it, if that was used and it was apparent from context that it was something we know today, mercury, G.W. would've writ the word we use, "mercury", like he does with all the other words where that is the case.

And I doubt there would be a

common term for it anyway---who would have it sitting around the house?

People whose homes contain Emerald Tablets and homunculi, and other 20th century electrical conveniences like electric eyes and metal detectors, or whose homes are rocketships crammed full of eternally repaired ancient gear that might include mercury switches, mercury balances, mercury bearings, et cetera. ?Autarch Severian is both, and then some.

--

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil>

Marc Aramini — 16 Jul 2014, 22:13 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

Would temp change the balance though? If mercury expanded or contracted.

On Wednesday, July 16, 2014, DAVID STOCKHOFF <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
Mercury has a very low freezing point and a very high boiling point. Hard to imagine temperature being a problem!

On Wednesday, July 16, 2014 2:34 PM, Marc Aramini <marcaramini at gmail.com>
<javascript:_e(%7B%7D,'cvml','marcaramini at gmail.com');>> wrote:

I have to thematically disagree with that assessment, Jeffery. The astronaut is called a knight, the Latin is mistranslated ... New things get old names, but sometimes old things get new or even older names. Could very easily be Mercury. Would the loft of his blade be greatly affected by temperatures? Warm or cold weather blade?

On Wednesday, July 16, 2014, Jeffery Wilson clueland.com <jwilson at clueland.com>
<javascript:_e(%7B%7D,'cvml','jwilson at clueland.com');>> wrote:

On 7/16/2014 10:56 AM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:

Perhaps, but you certainly wouldn't expect him to call it "mercury." Way too many conflicting associations there.

Whatever word the Commonwealth's tongue had for it, if that was used and it was apparent from context that it was something we know today, mercury, G.W. would've writ the word we use, "mercury", like he does with all the other words where that is the case.

And I doubt there would be a common term for it anyway---who would have it sitting around the house?

People whose homes contain Emerald Tablets and homunculi, and other 20th century electrical conveniences like electric eyes and metal detectors, or whose homes are rocketships crammed full of eternally repaired ancient gear that might include mercury switches, mercury balances, mercury bearings, et cetera. Autarch Severian is both, and then some.

--

Jeff Wilson - <jwilson at clueland.com>
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil>

Gerry Quinn — 16 Jul 2014, 23:16 · in reply to Marc Aramini

On 16/07/2014 23:13, Marc Aramini wrote:
Would temp change the balance though? If mercury expanded or contracted.

Not really, given that it has space to run around inside. The thermal expansion would reduce the space available to it only slightly.

In practice, I don't believe there would be any real benefit to making a sword this way anyway. It sounds good (moving mercury adding to the force of the downstroke) but this would really only work if the sword started almost horizontal - and if it did, it's hard to see how it would accelerate enough to behead someone. But if the sword rises before it falls, the mercury has to

be lifted too, so it makes no net addition to the force of the blow. A solid sword, permanently weighted at the end, would work just as well and probably better.

- Gerry Quinn

David Stockhoff — 16 Jul 2014, 23:39 · in reply to Gerry Quinn

It's probably impractical. On the other hand, its "gimcrackery" emphasizes the theatrical nature of the role of executioner. It might even be intended as much to frighten thieves and the gullible (as it did once) as to aid in the swing.

Besides, when you first lift the sword from the horizontal, the mercury would rush toward the hilt, bringing its center of gravity closer to the body. I think the real benefit may be simply to make lifting it easier. It could also assist in accuracy on the downswing, a notorious problem for executioners. Think of it as a crude gyroscope.

Because Severian doesn't seem to be bothered by its effects when using the sword in combat (for which is certainly was not intended), they may be slight. But it could speed the blade just enough to make a stroke look decisive, which as Severian suggests plays to the psychological aspects of the job, i.e., the problem of the executioner not being up to the job.

It's actually amazing that no one has tried to make one, at least that I have heard of. I wonder what technical challenges would be involved.

On 7/16/2014 7:16 PM, Gerry Quinn wrote:

On 16/07/2014 23:13, Marc Aramini wrote:

Would temp change the balance though? If mercury expanded or contracted.

Not really, given that it has space to run around inside. The thermal expansion would reduce the space available to it only slightly.

In practice, I don't believe there would be any real benefit to making a sword this way anyway. It sounds good (moving mercury adding to the force of the downstroke) but this would really only work if the sword started almost horizontal - and if it did, it's hard to see how it would accelerate enough to behead someone. But if the sword rises before it falls, the mercury has to be lifted too, so it makes no net addition to the force of the blow. A solid sword, permanently weighted at the end, would work just as well and probably better.

- Gerry Quinn

Jeffery Wilson clueland.com — 17 Jul 2014, 02:28 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

On 7/16/2014 2:56 PM, DAVID STOCKHOFF wrote:

Mercury has a very low freezing point and a very high boiling point.

Hard to imagine temperature being a problem!

Yes, which is one reason I didn't suggest Germanium, unless the chamber is also a perfect thermal insulator.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson at clueland.com >

A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab

< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >

David Duffy — 17 Jul 2014, 02:55 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Thu, 17 Jul 2014, David Stockhoff wrote:

It's actually amazing that no one has tried to make one, at least that I have heard of. I wonder what technical challenges would be involved.

<http://www.swordforum.com/forums/showthread.php?102296-Sword-with-sliding-weight>

"...and from his huge sword, which had a remarkable accessory in the shape of an iron ball that slid along the back of the blade to give an additional weight to every cut"

Jeffery Wilson [clueland.com](mailto:jwilson@clueland.com) — 17 Jul 2014, 03:09 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On 7/16/2014 6:39 PM, David Stockhoff wrote:

It's probably impractical. On the other hand, its "gimcrackery" emphasizes the theatrical nature of the the role of executioner. It might even be intended as much to frighten thieves and the gullible (as it did once) as to aid in the swing.

Besides, when you first lift the sword from the horizontal, the mercury would rush toward the hilt, bringing its center of gravity closer to the body. I think the real benefit may be simply to make lifting it easier. It could also assist in accuracy on the downswing, a notorious problem for executioners.

This can work, and it will also help the horizontal stroke with a wide swing against the greater movement arm with the liquid at the tip. But I don't see how it could be less than difficult to do the double thigh-breaker at Saltus.

Jeff Wilson - < jwilson@clueland.com >
A&M Texarkana Computational Intelligence Lab
< <http://www.tamut.edu/cil> >